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OR,

BRISTOL AND BUCKET'S BOOM

BY E. L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS.

CHAPTER I.
RACHEL COHEN.

In early August a morning newspaper of Leadville, Col., published among other things the following:

"The well-known detective, R. M. Bristol, better known as 'Deadwood Dick,' is among yesterday's arrivals at the Clarendon. We wonder what this signifies?"

Quite early, the same morning this notice appeared, a young woman, dressed in black, entered the office of the Clarendon, approached the clerk and inquired for Mr. Bristol and was

"MINE TEER FRIENT, YOU HIT DOT NAIL RIGHT AVAY QVICK ON DER HEADT," DICK LAUGHED, ENJOYING HER ASTONISHMENT IMMENSELY.

directed to a young man, sitting near the window, perusing a paper.

She was less than twenty years of age, evidently, and her features proclaimed her to be of Jewish extraction. While not exactly a beauty, she was fairly good-looking.

She approached the detective without hesitation, and addressed him:

"Are you Mr. Bristol?"

"I am," was the answer, as Dick looked up with some surprise, for, not having seen the newspaper notice of his arrival, he had no reason to suppose his presence in the city was known.

"My name is Rachel Cohen," the young woman said, "and I would like to engage your services!"

"Indeed? Well—ahem! I had not calculated to follow my profession for a time; however, if I can be of service to you, I am at your command."

"You can be of great service to me," the young woman declared. "There is a quiet restaurant, two blocks up the street, where we can better converse, than here. If you will join me there, in ten minutes, I will talk with you."

"Certainly," Richard assented, and Miss Cohen bowed, and withdrew.

"A comely-looking Jewess," commented the detective, meditatively. "I wonder what she wants. I was calculating to here enjoy a good rest, but it seems that is to be denied me."

He and his youthful pard, Billy Bucket, had only arrived from the East the previous night, and neither had as yet obtained the rest and quiet they sought.

Nevertheless, Dick hunted up the restaurant, and found the Jewess seated at one of the tables, with a bottle and two glasses before her.

She smilingly welcomed the detective to a seat opposite, and filled a glass for him, of whitish amber liquid.

"Some fine old caraway brandy," she observed. "Drink it. It will do you good. We Hebrews are very fond of it."

Dick perfectly agreed with her, after he had sampled it. It was superior and different from anything he had ever drank.

"And, now, I suppose you wish to know what I want of you?" Rachel remarked.

"Yes, I am here for that purpose."

"Just so. I am a sort of amateur detective, myself, and I want your able assistance. In other words, for a limited period, I want you to enter into the pawnbroker's business with me!"

"The pawnbroker's business?" and Dick looked his astonishment.

"Yes, run the three balls business," Miss Cohen replied.

"But, what in the world has that to do with detective work, which I understand you want done?"

"More than you suppose. Matters will be plainer to you when you hear my story. Are you prepared to listen to it?"

"Certainly. Please proceed."

"Very well. About seven months ago, my father, Moses Cohen, sold out his lucrative pawnbroker's business in New Orleans, and we set out for this city, where papa contemplated going into the mine-broking business."

"When we left New Orleans, papa carried with him over ten thousand dollars in money, a United States Government bond for thirty thousand, maturing in the year 1900, and watches, diamonds and other jewelry, unredeemed pledges, to the amount of a hundred thousand more. Many of the diamonds were rare and valuable, one in particular, which I call to mind being the Sultan, valued at ten thousand dollars."

"All these valuables my father carried in a small hand-sachel, as he had little confidence in Express companies, having a few years before met with a heavy loss through Wells, Fargo and Company."

"Well, our journey was without incident worthy of mention, until we reached that God-forsaken place, Pueblo, in the dead of winter. Here we found the trains for Leadville all snowed in, and were likely to remain so for days to come. The only way to reach here, was by a stage line, that was going to try and make a trip through with the mails, and rather than remain in Pueblo, we managed to secure passage on the stage."

"We were the only passengers, and the prospect of the journey was anything but pleasing; however, we were willing to undertake it."

"Well, when we were about midway between Pueblo and Leadville, the stage was stopped by road-agents, and we were ordered to give up our valuables. My father protested, and was shot

dead before my eyes. I was told I would share his fate unless I handed over everything, and I was so terrified that I obeyed. Then the robbers ordered the driver to push on, and they disappeared in the pines."

"We reached Leadville, and I had to telegraph home for my own private bank account before I could bury my poor father."

"This is very sad, indeed!" Dick remarked. "These road-agent depredations are simply a shame and a curse to our fair Western country. How many were there of the road-agents, Miss Cohen?"

"Two of them, both roughly dressed, and masked so that no view could be obtained of their features. One, however, I am sure was a woman, from her shape, and the intonation of her voice."

"Very possible! I have known of frequent instances where women have resorted to that sort of thing. And to find those robbers you wish to engage me?"

"Yes."

"Humph! After a lapse of seven months or so, I fear that would be impossible. Did you not appeal to the authorities in your behalf?"

"I did, and for a time, I really think they tried to find the scoundrels. But, of course, interest soon lagged. I, however, have never given up hope, that eventually I should come into possession of proof by which this pair of murderers of my father might be run to earth."

"Well, I can say I admire your pluck; but have you found any clew?"

"I think I have. At the time of the stage robbery, after he had received the plunder, one of the robbers tossed me one of his cards, saying in a mocking tone: 'Take that, lady, so you will know me when we meet again.' This is the card."

She handed Dick an ordinary playing card—the ace of diamonds.

Just below the picture of the ace was added, in red ink pen-print: "OF LEADVILLE."

"You infer that one or both of the stage robbers belonged in Leadville?"

"I do," Rachel replied. "Not only from what is written on the card, but for another reason."

"And what is that?"

"Well, the other day, while visiting a pawnbroker's shop in this city, I found my father's gold watch and chain, with his name engraved upon the case—found it there, on sale."

"Ah! did you find who put it in pawn?"

"Unfortunately, no. It had been pledged for fifty dollars, for three months. The time was up two months ago, and as no one appeared to redeem it, it had been placed on sale as forfeited. The pawnbroker could not say who had pawned it."

"I always supposed a pawnbroker was obliged to keep a list of the names of those who left goods in pledge," Dick observed.

"Such is the case, almost everywhere," answered Rachel, "but this man, Michaels, says he doesn't bother with a record, as most customers give false names, and not one in ten return to redeem their pledges."

"Perhaps I will see this Michaels," and Dick made a note of the name. "It don't look to me that a business man as sharp as a pawnbroker must needs be, would make himself amenable to penalty of the law out of pure carelessness. Did you leave your father's watch with Michaels, Miss Cohen?"

"Yes. It was a very large affair, and unfit for a lady to carry, and, as he won't sell it for less than seventy-five dollars, I concluded the money would be of more use to me than the watch."

"I presume so. Now, Miss Cohen, how about your proposed pawnbroker's venture? What is your object in that?"

"Experiment. I am thoroughly conversant with the business. I will put out all the money, bear all your expenses, and pay you your price. The firm will be under your own or an assumed name; you will transact the business under my direction."

"But has this any bearing upon the robbery or murder case?"

"It has. I am well satisfied in my own mind that the murderers of my father, one or both, are residents of this city. The very fact of the pawned watch proves that they have been here. Now, they have a hundred thousand dollars worth of diamonds, which they will from time to time try to realize money upon. At my instance, every jeweler and pawnbroker in or near Leadville has been legally notified to be on the lookout for people disposing of diamonds, second-hand watches and other jewelry, and report to me. See?"

"Yes."

"Consequently, they must needs be careful whom they deal with. Now, if we open a pawnshop—a new place of business—conducted, say for instance, by Jacobs of St. Louis, don't it stand to reason that these wretches who are trying to work off their ill-gotten booty, will pay us a visit? I know by heart nearly everything that was stolen, having handled them twice daily, during the years of their collection. What do you think of my plan?"

Dick surveyed the young Jewess unbounded amazement.

"You are certainly clever," he replied; "you ought to belong to the profession. Your plan is simply splendid, and I can see but two drawbacks to its success."

"What are they?"

"First, the probability that our game is not in Leadville at all."

"I feel positive they are here, so positive that I will cheerfully expend a considerable sum to prove the matter, one way or another. What is your second drawback?"

"Providing those road-agents are in the city, I apprehend that they have kept a watch on you, and if you were to open a pawnshop they would be the last ones to patronize you."

"True. But, I am not to open it. You are to do that. You are to transact all the business while I keep out of sight, where I can give you any instructions you may need. It can be so arranged that I cannot be seen in connection with the establishment at all."

"Very well. I'll take hold of the case for you, together with the co-operation with my young partner, whom we can utilize as a 'shadow.' He is as keen as a razor, and we work well together. How about the store fixtures and so forth?"

"I leave that all to you. A store is for rent on the next block. You rent it, put in a counter, shelving, a safe, a desk, and a partition across the room, ten or fifteen feet from the front door. The rear room is for me, but the partition is to be so built as to allow you to pass from behind the counter into the rear room. This will be all for you to do, except some signs, and such cleaning at needs to be done."

"How about license?"

"The Jewish gentleman to whom I am engaged will arrange that. It will be issued in his own name, Samuel Jacobs. He belongs to the city government, and will have no difficulty in securing it. After my marriage, I will probably conduct the business myself."

A diplomat, as well as mighty smart, thought Dick. But he did not express his thoughts in words.

"Any other instructions or suggestions?"

"None that I think of, at present. You will find me here at this hour, to consult with you. I will give you five hundred dollars. Use as much as necessary. By the way, have your sign to correspond with the license, you know."

"I understand. Another thing I had not thought of. I am a detective, and, as such, am known, here in Leadville!"

The Jewess shrugged her shoulders.

"If you're half as smart as I've heard you were, you will have no difficulty in disguising yourself. Your hours will be from seven to six, and if you choose to be Deadwood Dick after hours, what's to prevent?"

"Very well. I will see that operations are begun at once. And so I will bid you good-day."

"Good-day, sir! I feel that we shall be successful."

"I hope so," Dick replied, and took his leave.

Here he was, again, engaged upon another detective case, which, in some respects, was the most novel of any he had yet "tackled."

CHAPTER II.

AN ACT OF CHARITY.

AFTER his interview with Rachel, Dick returned to the hotel.

Billy Bucket had already gone out, to view the mysteries of the magic mountain city; so Dick seated himself in the hotel office, to think over that morning's adventure.

"That's a mighty smart girl!" he reflected, as he smoked his cigar, leisurely, "a mighty smart girl. Her scheme is novel, practical, and certainly original. Had her case not had so much novelty in it, I should not have undertaken it. But, I am in for it, and I will see it through."

"Ha! ha! I'll have some fun out of it, playing off Jew pawnbroker, if nothing more! The first thing is to find a quiet boarding place, where I can go and come as I please; the second thing is to disguise myself as Samuel Jacobs, &

Jew. I don't know what kind of a man the original Samuel is, but that will make no difference." So he left the hotel to hunt up a boarding place.

This proved a harder task than he had anticipated.

Although immensely larger as a city than the town of ten years before, when he visited it, he was not long in finding out that there was still much lack in accommodations for those who were not able or not disposed to stand the extravagant hotel rates.

After much calling and investigating, during which half of the day was consumed, he found the place desired. It was on the outskirts of the town, on the trail to Oro—a crazy little cottage, built of unplanned boards, with a porch, and in front a little flower-bedecked yard guarded by a wire fence. The exterior was freshly white-washed; there were curtains at the windows, and a poorly-respectable home-made sign of "Boarding & Lodging.—Mrs. J. Sheldon."

"I reckon this is the place I'm looking for," Dick soliloquized, as he paused to take an exterior view of it. "Everything looks neat, and the name of Sheldon savors of hospitality. So I'll try it."

He advanced up the gravelly walk to the front door and rapped—there being no bell for ringing.

His summons was immediately answered by a rustic, but by no means homely, lass of eighteen, —a boydenish, bright-eyed girl, with the color and development of perfect health, who evidently preferred the out-of-doors to the in.

"Are you Mrs. Sheldon?" Dick asked, well knowing better.

"Oh! no—I am her daughter"—coloring, slightly; for Dick was such a handsome, dashing-looking fellow as she had seldom seen. "Did you wish to see ma?"

"I called to see about board and lodging," Dick replied.

"Oh! certainly. Step right in. I am sure we can accommodate you."

Dick complied, and was given "a chair" in the comfortable front parlor and sitting-room combined, where there were also seated two other persons—ladies.

One was a small, thin, matronly-looking woman, with pinched, and sad, but withal kindly face, and hair streaked liberally with gray.

She was plainly, but neatly clad, and Dick at once set her down as Mrs. Sheldon.

The other woman was tall, masculine of figure, with a hard, cruel face—some might have termed a handsome one; cold, restless gray eyes, and a mass of hair, which, if it were not a wig, had most likely been chemically bleached, to make it appear blonde; but the job had been at best a sickly effort.

She was richly attired, but not with the taste of refinement; she wore diamonds and plenteous other jewelry, all of which became her; but for all that, she still lacked the infallible indications which betray the lady of refined tastes.

Richard Bristol had passed through enough phases of experience to be able to read a person at a glance; and he set this gaudy woman of uncertain age down as a grasping, unfeeling woman of the world, who had sprung from the lowest or most unpromising associations.

"Ma," the young woman said, after giving Dick a seat, "the gentleman called to inquire after board. Do you think we can accommodate him?"

"I think we can, if he can put up with such accommodations as we can give him," the thin lady answered.

"And, poor enough they will be!" put in the richly dressed woman, viciously. People who can't pay their rent, can't set much of a table. By the way, Mrs. Sheldon, I do not care to hear your business. Pay me the half month's rent, and I will leave."

"Oh! Mrs. Redfern, how can you be so hard on me, when I have told you it would be utterly impossible to raise you the money, before day after to-morrow!" cried Mrs. Sheldon, wringing her thin hands, in distress.

By this time, Dick's anger was beginning to rise.

"Mrs. Sheldon," he said, "excuse me for interrupting, but how much do you owe this Mrs. Redfern?"

"Just half a month's rent, sir. But—"

"No but about it. How much money?"

"Six dollars, sir."

"Six dollars? That's twelve dollars a month, or one hundred and forty-four dollars a year. Please get me a pen and ink, and I will settle with the lady, and you can make it right with me, whenever convenient—if it is agreeable."

"You are very kind, sir, but I do not feel

right to accept a favor from a stranger," Mrs. Sheldon faltered.

"Have no compunctions on that score. It is merely a business transaction, to free you from being harassed by a relentless landlord," Dick said, seating himself at a table. "Ink and pen, please, while I fill out a receipt for the money I pay."

Ink and pen were produced, and taking a blank receipt from his book, Dick filled it out to read as follows:

"LEADVILLE, Col., Aug. —, 188—

"Received from Mrs. J. Sheldon, one hundred and fifty dollars, for one year's house rent from date, and half a month's rent overdue, viz:

To rent overdue \$ 6 00

For rent one year in advance from

date of receipt 144 00

Total \$150 00

Signed, _____"

"Now, madam," Dick said, turning to the woman, "if you will sign this receipt your money is ready!"

Mrs. Redfern was white with suppressed rage, at this interference.

"I'll sign nothing!" she cried, vehemently. "You're a low-lived fellow."

"I know it," Dick smilingly retorted—"just enough of a fellow, you know, to frustrate a designing beauty like you. You will please affix your signature to this receipt, receive your money, and depart, or, as an officer of the law, I'll land you in the station-house, inside of ten minutes. I happen to know you, if you don't know me!"

It was a venture, this "knowing" business, on the part of Dick, but it had its effect.

The madam was startled, and paled.

With a perceptible hiss, she arose, advanced to the table and read the receipt.

The Sheldons, mother and daughter, clasped arms, stood looking wonderingly on, very much nonplused and frightened.

"Give me the pen—I will sign it!" Mrs. Redfern said.

"Sign your full name, with 'owner' or 'agent' added below," Dick directed.

The signature was made.

It read: "Mrs. Harriet Redfern, Owner."

"Correct!" Dick said. "Here is your money, madam, and I warn you not to annoy these worthy people any more, for the period of one year. If you do, I shall make it my business to interfere again. Now, the sooner you go, the better."

"Thank you," was the reply, as the woman gathered up the money, "but, remember this—you shall pay for the way you have insulted me."

"One year hence, I will be ready to do so," Dick called after her, as she strode across the room, and left the house, slamming the door after her.

Deadwood Dick leaned back in his chair, and laughed, heartily.

"I reckon she won't bother you again, very soon, Mrs. Sheldon," he said. "If she does, why, have her arrested. Here is your receipt; take and preserve it carefully."

Mrs. Sheldon took the receipt, and read it.

"Oh! sir, what have you done?" she cried. "This calls for one year's rent, paid in advance."

"Certainly. That's to save you any further trouble at the hands of that woman. And now that that matter is settled, how about accommodations? I want a room, and meals when I chance to be here at meal time. And I want a room under peculiar circumstances, which I will endeavor to explain to you."

"I am professionally a detective, and am about to engage upon a case in this city. In my work, I shall adopt the character of a Jew, and my appearance must necessarily be somewhat changed. I may also have to adopt other disguises. I tell you this, so that, should I pop in upon you, at any time, in the guise of Satan himself, you need not be startled, nor alarmed. Of course, when I sit down at your table in the presence—"

"I have no other boarders, at present—that is why I was behind on my rent," Mrs. Sheldon interrupted. "And I am very sorry you paid out so much money, sir, for I don't see how we are ever to pay you."

"Don't worry about that. I shall not miss it, for I've frequently lost more than that, at cards, in a single sitting. How about a room? There will be myself and young partner, Billy Bucket, and we want to get located as soon as possible."

"Well, Mr.— Let me see, what shall I call you?"

"My name is Bristol."

"Well, Mr. Bristol, if you think this room would suit you, we will put a bed in it for you, give you the front door-key, and you can come and go as you please."

"Capital! This will just suit. Now, name your price, and I will pay you a week in advance, for myself and partner."

"Really, Mr. Bristol, you have been so very kind, that I—"

"Nonsense!" Dick interrupted. "Don't mention that other matter. Here are fifteen dollars, for the first week, and if that isn't right—"

"Oh! sir, that is worlds of plenty!"

And the widow and her daughter could but look their thanks.

The matter being satisfactorily arranged, Dick took leave of the Sheldons, and went back into town to hunt up his *protege* partner, Billy Bucket.

This did not require a great length of time, for the lad had a great fondness for music, and was finally located in a concert garden.

He and Dick then went to the Clarendon, procured a drayman to haul their baggage to the Sheldons', and, within an hour afterward, were snugly ensconced in their new quarters.

Dick then took Billy into his confidence, and told him all about the new case he had undertaken.

Billy was highly elate.

The prospect of probably being able to add another feather to his young detective cap filled him with enthusiasm.

The remainder of the day was occupied by Dick in "fixing" up, not an easy metamorphosis, but, by perseverance, and with the aid of a wig, false beard, etc., he finally succeeded so well that Billy enthusiastically pronounced him an A-1 Moses.

The Sheldons were then called in to view the transformation, and were filled with astonishment.

"I don't believe it is Mr. Bristol," Myra Sheldon openly declared.

"Mine teer young voman, dot shows how in-experience you vas in shudging dose physiognomies!" Dick replied. "I pet haluf a tollar dot I vas dot same Meester Breestol."

"Hurrah for Sheeny Dick!" cried Billy Bucket, in delight.

CHAPTER III.

AN EVENING EPISODE.

As, when Dick had finished perfecting his disguise, it was too late to transact any business that day, he and Billy concluded to take a turn around town, and "see the elephant," if there was one to be seen.

At the time of which we write, the mayor, and his cohorts, the police, had been successful in breaking up the numerous gambling-houses with which the city abounded, and putting the sports and sharps to flight.

Finding their vocation gone in Leadville, they had swooped down upon the town of Pueblo in a swarm.

Thus it was that a great part of the sporting life and excitement, that had formerly characterized Leadville, was now gone, and about all that remained to attract were the theaters and concert gardens or saloons.

Dick visited a couple of these latter, where free variety shows were given, the proprietors of the shebang depending upon the receipts of the bar to pay their "talent," which was from fair to bad.

The talent, by the way, was largely feminine. Now and then an "artiste"—all are dubbed "artistes," by the way—would turn out to be rather pretty and quite *chic*, but, as a rule, they were homely and gross.

After doing a turn on the stage, the female artistes came from the platform and seated themselves at one of the many ables at which the audience were forced to sit, the chairs being fast to the floor, and whoever the male auditor chanced to be in whose company she seated herself, he was expected, though not invited to "treat."

It is not always, thank Heaven, that the poor, foolish miss who enters upon the life of a variety girl, is willing to do this, but, in all far Western resorts where drinks are sold, they are bound to do it.

It is in the contract! When not on the stage they are to "work the tables." The most successful in this peculiar line of business stands highest in the estimation of the proprietor of the "teater."

To refuse to sign a contract of this sort, is to be refused an engagement; and for a patron of one of these "theaters" to be so ungallant as not to ask one of the artistes who sat at his

table to "take suthin'," would be a decided breach of Western etiquette, and he would be classed a brute; and if he was not "given away" from the stage, he could safely consider himself lucky.

We merely write the foregoing as a truthful illustration of the evil the misguided girl has to undergo who adopts the variety profession as a means of earning a living, and drifts westward in hopes of bettering her fortunes.

The old-time days when excited miners threw gold and silver on the stage at the feet of a favored star, are not these of ours.

The last place visited by Dick and Billy was McDonald's, and it proved to be the best of the lot.

It was a spacious, though barn-like place, with a fair stage, and plenty of chairs and tables, and was brilliantly lighted.

The company might be classed good, for resorts of the "free admission" class.

The orchestra was even better.

There was but comparatively a small audience present; indeed, the number of white-aproned waiters present, eager to serve drinks, seemed almost as many as the audience itself.

It was the same old stereotyped variety performance of songs, dances, Irish and negro sketches, but, as a whole, fairly interpreted.

Among the female talent there was one who attracted Dick's attention more than the rest.

She was a ballad singer—a girl of maybe nineteen, very pale—not artificially so—with pretty features and sad blue eyes; hair as dark as the raven's wing, which fell in a wave below her waist.

She had a voice as sweet as a bird's, and rendered her songs admirably, but in a peculiarly sad way, it struck Dick, that told of trouble, maybe, or an unhappy life.

Dick took a greater interest in her than he would have cared to acknowledge, though it was but a sympathetic feeling.

After she had done her turn, however, she came off the stage and wandered through the audience.

There were plenty of tables occupied by better dressed and better-looking men than Dick, in his singular disguise, but that did not seem to make the difference, for Edna Grey, as she was announced on the bills, came direct to the table where the disguised detective was seated, and helped herself to a chair.

"Oh! I am so tired," she said, with a long-drawn sigh. "What do you think of the show?"

"Fine—superfine!" Dick replied. "I dells mine young frient here dot I neffer sees dot equals off id. So id vas much hard vorruk, my teer young lady?"

"You bet!" was the characteristic response.

"And you vil shoin us in a glass of vine, my teer young lady?"

"Oh! I suppose so; that's what I'm here for, partly—" this with a shrug of the shoulders.

Dick ordered the wine, and then resumed conversation.

"You must make so much of dot money vot you don't know vot to do vid it, my deer lady?"

"Oh! yes; we're liable not to get less than a million a week—of promises!" Miss Grey said, with sarcasm. "You'd make your fortune, however. Where'd you catch on to the dialect?"

"Der vot?"

"The dialect—the sheeny business?"

"De talk, you mean. Vy, dot comes natural. I vas a Hebrew, don't you see?"

"Yes you are! You think I don't know you, Mr. Deadwood Dick, but I do, even in that disguise, which is a good one. You was pointed out to me once, up in Deadwood, and I never forgot you. I'd know you, if I were to meet you at the North Pole, no matter how you were disguised."

Dick's astonishment was complete. He was never more surprised in his life.

"Py my soul, I know not vot you mean, py all dis foolishness!" he exclaimed, vigorously, smiting the table with his fist. "So helb me cracious, nopody has got dot dead-voodt mit me, un I leaf et to mine young frient, here. My name is Samuel Jacobs, and I am a shentleman. I haf shust come from St. Louis."

At that instant, a brawny individual, six foot in his socks, and ugly of aspect, advanced toward the table.

He had a fat, repulsive face, deeply pock-marked, bloodshot eyes, and, in fact, the general slouchy and brutal appearance of typical border-ruffian.

"Hello! here! What's the matter?" he hoarsely demanded of the woman, at the same time glaring at Dick, savagely.

"Nothing! nothing!" Edna hastened to as-

sure. "I was just teasing him a little, and he got excited."

"Got excited did he? Cuss a sheeny, anyhow! I'll make him more excited, or my name ain't Ben Brice!"

With that, and before the pseudo Jew could attain his guard, the rough slapped Dick full in the face, with the palm of his hand.

So heavy and unexpected was the blow, that it completely upset Mr. Jacobs, chair and all.

But, Dick was on his feet, in an instant, and soon proved to the *habitués* of the garden that he could "handle" himself far better than they could reasonably have expected, for, with two scientifically directed blows, he laid the bully out, insensible, upon the floor.

The whole thing was done so quickly and so quietly, that few of the audience knew a disturbance had occurred, until they heard Brice's ponderous bulk fall upon the floor.

After he had "laid out" the giant, Dick turned to his companion, Billy Bucket.

"Come, my poy; petter ve leave dis place right away off pooty quick. I'd don't vas no place for shendlemens, like us."

And, accordingly, they left the theater, no one offering to molest them.

The hour was already growing late, and so they hurried toward their lodgings, at the Sheldon cottage on the Oro trail.

"My eyes, but how you did polish the big sucker off!" Billy said, admiringly. "I didn't have no idea you could handle yer dukes so clever."

"I am sorry the row occurred," Dick replied, "for it will probably lead to more unpleasantness. If my theory is correct, he sets himself up as the bully of the town, and, smarting under his defeat of to-night, he won't rest until he has again sought to revenge himself upon me!"

"But ye can do him, can't yer?"

"It is not a question of that kind. What we most want in the case we have on hand is quiet, and an avoidance of public notoriety."

But as in Western life every man is in some way characterized by his deeds, so was Dick, when he appeared upon the street next day, characterized as the Fighting Sheeny.

And the appellation clung to him as long as he remained in Leadville in the character of Samuel Jacobs.

CHAPTER IV.

SAMUEL JACOBS, PAWNBROKER.

THE next day was a busy one to Deadwood Dick.

He arose at an early hour, breakfasted with the Sheldons, and leaving Billy to go whither he pleased, the would-be pawnbroker started for town.

He must rent and fix up the store as a pawnbroker's office, according to his promise to Rachel Cohen, and get things in readiness for opening up the business.

He first visited the office of the real-estate agent having the property in question to let, and after a good deal of parleying, succeeded in leasing the store for one month, with the privilege of longer, at a rental of fifty dollars per month, in advance.

This he paid, and obtained possession of the keys.

The next thing was lumber, and a carpenter to build a counter and partition.

Thanks be to the surrounding forests, there is no dearth of lumber in Leadville, and he soon let out the contract, and had the satisfaction of seeing the carpenters at work.

It was while wandering about town, in quest of a desk and some office furniture, that he encountered Rachel.

She evidently did not recognize him, for she was about to pass him by, when he intercepted her.

"My teer young lady," he said, "if I mistaken me not, you vas of Hebrew extraction, don't it?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply. "Why do you ask?"

"Pecause, mine frient, I t'ink maype you can tells me somet'ink about sompody dot I pe looking vor, you see—von acquaintance vot I search for, and cannot find."

"Perhaps I can, sir, although I have few acquaintances in place this. For whom are you looking?"

"Von Mees Rachel Cohen, vot did live in New Orleans, apout a year ago."

"Rachel Cohen? Why, I am she!"

Then, a new light began to dawn upon her, and she gazed at her inquisitor more searchingly. Mr. Bristol, can it be possible it is you?"

"Mine teer frient, you hit dot nail right away qvick on der headt," Dick laughed, enjoying her astonishment, immensely. "Vot you t'ink about dot disguise of mine, Mees Cohen."

"It is capital!" Rachel declared, surveying him, approvingly. "I should never have suspected your identity, had you not spoken to me."

"How you t'ink I make out as a pawnbroker, eh? If you haf some valuables, and you pe hard up for money, I make you dot liberal advances on dem, vot mine brodders of der pizness vil not do!"

"You'll do!" Rachel assured. "You are the very right man to put in the right place. How far have you proceeded?"

"Well, I've rented the store, set the carpenters to work, and things will be in shape for the opening to-morrow, I expect, providing the license is ready."

"I have it in my pocket, now," Rachel said, "and am having some tickets printed, by a personal friend of mine."

They conversed for a few seconds longer, and then separated.

During the day Dick secured an office desk and stool, a safe, and some other necessities, and had them moved to the store; he also had a gilt sign painted, bearing the inscription:

SAMUEL JACOBS,

LICENSED PAWNBROKER.

Liberal Advances Upon All Kinds of
Personal Property.

Another painter decorated the windows of the store with a like inscription, and by dusk that night, the store was ready for business.

A partition, with a door in it had been run across the store, dividing it into two rooms, about ten feet in width by fifteen in depth.

At one side was the counter, and high desk, back of which were rows of shelves, sub-divided into pigeon-holes for the reception of pawned goods.

The rear room was to be occupied by Miss Cohen, and could be reached in several ways; from the office, by the door in the partition; through an opening behind the counter; and by a door in the rear of the building.

Rachel, came about dusk, to view the situation, and pronounced the preparations all that she could have desired.

The pawnshop opened the next morning, at the hour prescribed by law.

Rachel Cohen had moved into the rear room, so as to be ready to prompt Dick how much to loan on any article that might be offered in pledge.

Dick, in his character of Sam'l Jacobs, occupied a position behind the counter, and Billy Bucket acted in capacity of office boy.

We will pass over the next few days that followed, for they were utterly devoid of incident, as nobody came to pledge anything.

The outlook was not particularly encouraging. Rachel however, kept in better spirits than Mr. Jacobs.

"They are bound to come sooner or later," she insisted, but Dick doubted, although he did not say so.

The first customer came on the fourth day.

He was a gentleman of color, and brought an old-fashioned silver watch, that may have seen service in Revolutionary times.

"Dat watch used to belong to George Washington, sah!" said Eli Johnson, proudly.

"Ve don't loan money on dot reputation of Shorge Vashington, mine frient?" assured Mr. Jacobs. "Dot vatch pe a good-vor-not'ing turnip. Vot you vant on id?"

"Five dollahs, sah!"

"Five tollars! Moses in der bullrushes! Vy you vas crazy, mine frient! I can gif but ten cents on dot vatch, and dot ish too much!"

"Make it a quarter, boss—fo' de lub of Abraham Lincoln, boss, make it a quarter. Remember dat watch belonged to the Father of—"

"Fifteen cents an' no more!" said Mr. Jacobs, laying the watch on the counter, "an' I don't vant it at dot!"

"Well, boss, you's mighty hard on a poor cul-lud gen'man, but I s'pose I hab to take it. Give's dat fifteen cents. I'll not let dat vally-ble watch lay in hock longer dan to-morrow, if I bu'sts!"

"Vot's yer name?" asked Dick, rather proud of his maiden effort in the brokerage line.

"Git-Thar-Eli Johnsing, sah. Git-Thar-Eli, fo' short!"

So the watch "went in" for the amount of Dick's munificent offer, and Git-Thar-Eli went out to invest the fifteen cents at the saloon.

giving the biggest glass of whisky for that price.

The following day, and for several succeeding days, applications for loans were brisk, but the goods offered in pledge were of poor value, and hardly likely to be redeemed.

On Saturday night of the second week, after closing hours, Dick and Rachel figured up what moneys had been disbursed in loans, and found the sum total to be one hundred and thirty-five dollars and ten cents.

"I wouldn't give fifty dollars for the whole kit and cargo that's been pledged!" Dick averred, with a dubious shake of the head. "At this rate of procedure, you will need a national bank at your back, Miss Cohen."

Rachel was beginning to have less confidence in the success of her scheme, although she was loth to acknowledge it.

"Well, I will acknowledge that I am somewhat disappointed," she said, "but not so disheartened as you may think. It is true I have put out quite a little sum of money without realizing a cent in return; but I expected that when I made this venture. I have quite a snug little fortune of my own, left me by my mother, and I can afford to spend a goodly sum to bring my father's murderers to justice. To say nothing about the other losses, if I could secure the return of the Government bond, it would well repay time and expense."

"True. But my fear is that both time and money will be wasted in this venture. Two weeks have past, and we are no further ahead in the case than in the beginning. Another month most likely would leave a like result."

"I shall be better prepared to believe that when the proof is undeniable!" Rachel returned, with one of her persistent smiles. "I may appear headstrong, but now that we have started into this business, I don't believe in giving it up until we are sure there is no hope. So we will try it a week longer, anyhow."

And so it was settled.

Dick was to remain a week longer, at least, in his guise of Sam'l Jacobs.

He had "got his hand in," pretty well, so that he could run the business without any assistance from Rachel, if needs be.

After receiving his salary of fifty dollars for the week, he and Billy bade the young Jewess good-night, and betook themselves toward the Sheldon cottage.

It was Saturday night, and Dick was not sorry.

To-morrow, Sunday, he could devote to recreation.

Being cooped up behind a counter for a week at a time, was not the sort of thing for one of Dick's active nature, and it seemed like a release from prison to him to get out of doors and go whither he would.

The first novelty of a pawnbroker's life and experiences was beginning to wear off, and it would take a positive clew to work on against the robbers to thoroughly reawaken his interest in the case.

But, the wanting clew was not far off.

CHAPTER V.

A SUNDAY ADVENTURE.

SUNDAY dawned, bright and glorious.

The sky was clear and azure blue, the air was bracing, pine-scented and invigorating.

Dick was astir at daybreak, and took a brisk walk before breakfast.

Not so with Billy Bucket. This rarefied mountain air was new to him, and he awoke complaining of a headache, and requested to be allowed to lie abed until later in the day.

So, after breakfast, Dick mounted a fine saddle-horse which he had hired for the day, and set off for a ride in the mountains.

It seemed like old times for him to get back in the saddle once more, and he rode on, on, on, until it was high noon ere he drew rein 'way up in the mountains, and allowed his steed to quench its thirst and rest.

Dismounting, he threw himself upon the grass, also to rest.

He had ridden further than he had intended.

He was far beyond Leadville and her outlying suburbs.

He no longer wore his disguise of Sam'l Jacobs, but looked once more his natural self.

He lay in deep musing, while the horse grazed near at hand—lay there until he saw that the afternoon was waning; then he remounted and rode back toward Leadville.

It was a ride of three miles before any plain trail was struck, leading to the city, but, skilled in woodcraft as he was, Dick had no difficulty in finding it.

He had not followed the trail more than half a mile, however, when he abruptly drew rein.

The path ran in an almost straight course, with considerable descent, and from the point where Dick had drawn rein, a view ahead was obtainable, for a considerable distance, through an opening of the scrub forest.

This is what he saw, to cause his abrupt halt.

A narrow, rugged trail, and a horseman advancing up it; a masked one, too, mounted upon a magnificent black steed. The rider was of powerful build, and carried in his arms a bundle—a strange burden, for a glance told Dick that it was the form of a woman.

Dick had not come upon his outing, to-day, unprepared for any emergency. For he had his rifle, revolvers, and field-glass.

The latter he now brought into requisition, and found the burden the masked man carried was a young girl, and that cords were about her ankles and wrists.

Dick's mind was made up in an instant.

With the woman in his arms, the horseman was incapacitated for defending himself.

At the point where Dick had halted, the hemlocks to the right afforded an admirable ambush.

Into this he quickly rode, and dismounting, stepped to the edge of the thicket, rifle ready for use.

Slowly and laboriously the horse of the masked man came up the slope, and when it was but a few yards away, Dick stepped out upon the trail, and leveled his weapon.

"Halt!" he ordered, in a peremptory tone. "Halt, and dismount, or you're a dead man!"

The mountain pirate drew rein, but did not offer to obey orders, further.

"Who are you? What the deuce do you mean?" he roared, laying his hand toward his belt.

"Drop on that, or I'll plug ye!" Dick cried. "It you don't want daylight let through you, you will dismount, and lay the girl on the grass yonder. Come! no monkeyin'!"

The outlaw evidently realized the need of compliance.

To disregard the gleam of those keen eyes that shot along the rifle barrel, meant death!

Accordingly, the masker slid from his saddle to the ground, and deposited his burden as he had been bidden, upon the grass, beside the trail.

Dick, in the mean time, had slung his rifle to his back, and a pair of cocked cavalry "sixes" were in his grasp, into whose gaze the kidnapper glared, as he wheeled about.

"Remove your mask!" Dick ordered. "I think I know who you are, but want to be sure. Then, you can go—for I reckon, after your identity is established, you won't want to bother Leadville any more—at least while I am there!"

"Who the devil are you?" the ruffian demanded, disregarding the order he had received.

"Off with that mask!" Dick repeated, peremptorily. "I shall not tell you again!"

And off the mask came.

The ugly, bloated, pock-marked face of Ben Brice was exposed to view! Savage enough in expression, it was, too.

"It is as I thought—you are Ben Brice, the Leadville bully!" Dick said.

"Yes, I'm Ben Brice!" the ruffian cried, with an oath, "and I hope I may be et up with keotes ef I don't make you smart fer this insult."

"Oh! I'm not afraid of what you can do, you big loafer," Dick retorted, "and I'd advise you to fight shady of Leadville, as it will be exceedingly warm for you there, after this. By rights I should arrest you, take you back, and lock you up. For reasons of my own, I will let you go this time. Throw down your weapons, and you can go."

Brice was nothing loth to regain his liberty. There were too many bad scores against him already, to admit of his running any risks, so he concluded to make the best of the permit.

He drew his revolvers and knife, and cast them upon the ground.

"There! is there anything more ye want?" he demanded.

"You see the top of yonder hill? Well, my rifle will more than carry to the top of it. I'll give you just four minutes by the watch to get out of sight, beyond yonder hill-top. Go!"

Brice made a movement toward his horse.

"No you don't!" Dick warned. "You go afoot. I shall use your horse to take the young lady back to her home."

Brice glared at the other a moment in speechless rage.

"I've a mind to murder you!" he declared, savagely.

"I don't think it will be a healthy thing for you to attempt," Dick retorted.

"Come! be off, now, and if you so much as dare to look back before you reach the summit, I'll put a bullet through your cowardly carcass!"

Right well Brice knew his danger, so with no further hesitancy, he strode off up the steep trail.

Dick watched him until he had disappeared over the hill summit; then he turned to the captive.

She was a maiden of not more than seventeen, with a slight but graceful figure, a fair face, and brown eyes and hair.

She was well-dressed, and though bound hand and foot, was not unconscious.

She had been watching her rescuer with a glance of mingled curiosity and admiration.

"Well, miss, I trust you are not injured!" Dick said, as he removed the thongs that confined her wrists.

"Oh! no, sir, and I thank you very, very much for coming to my rescue. I shudder to think what my fate would have been, had I remained in the power of that ruffian."

"What is your name, miss?"

"Ella Crawford."

"Do you live in Leadville?"

"Oh! yes, sir—on H—street. Mamma is the Widow Crawford. You may have heard of her. She is one of the stockholders in the Little Pittsburg, and several other mines."

"I don't know that I have ever heard of her, being a comparative stranger in Leadville," Dick replied, "but I am proud of having had the pleasure of rescuing her daughter."

By this time he had removed all the bonds and assisted the young lady to her feet.

"We had better start at once on our return to the city," Dick decided, glancing at his watch. "Can you ride a horse, Miss Crawford?"

"Like a cowboy!" Ella replied. "Please assist me to mount, and I will show you."

He did so, and, ere he could mount his own steed, she was off like a flash.

Although not supplied with a side-saddle, she maintained her seat with as much ease and grace as though she were a part of the horse itself.

Dick was surprised. She reminded him of a vivid description he had once heard of the Queen of American Horsewomen, the late Calamity Jane!

And, keeping slightly in advance, Ella Crawford led the way back to Leadville.

When they reached the outskirts of the city she drew rein and allowed Dick to come up.

"There!" she said, her cheeks rosy and eyes sparkling, "can I ride, or not?"

"I should say you could," the detective replied, enthusiastically. "I never saw your superior."

"Thanks. I learned to ride when there were but ten shanties where Leadville now stands, and this was all a howling wilderness."

"I suppose you know your way home, now?" Dick queried.

"To be sure I do, but that does not excuse you. You must accompany me home and apologize to mamma."

"I—I guess I don't quite understand—"

"Of course you do; you must apologize for having the audacity to rescue me, when I was being romantically carried off by a bold ruffian. Ha! ha! ha! Come on; I won't take no for an answer! Mamma and Jim will be glad to welcome you."

Dick wondered who Jim might be—some big brother, no doubt, with a vast knowledge of mining, and little else, perhaps.

The truth be told, Dick would much rather have taken a header for the nearest restaurant, but then, as he could not get rid of his charge without committing an unpardonable breach of etiquette, he accompanied her.

They soon arrived at Mrs. Crawford's really elegant home, and Dick was presented to Ella's gracious mother—a lady in every sense of the word.

"Mamma," said Ella, by way of introduction, "this is Mr.—Mr.—"

"Bristol," supplemented Dick, bowing low.

"Yes, mamma, this is Mr. Bristol. Mr. Bristol, this is mamma. Now, mamma, dear, of all things, what do you suppose?"

"Dear me, I don't know, my child," the widow replied. "It's something terrible, I dare say."

"Yes, perfectly awful," Miss Crawford

averred. "You know I told you I was going for some flowers, this morning?"

"Yes, my dear, and as you did not return I presumed you had gone to call upon some of your acquaintances."

"But, I didn't, though. While I was engaged in gathering flowers I was suddenly pounced upon by that burly ruffian, Ben Brice, bound hand and foot and carried off into the mountains. Now, ain't that romantic?"

"My child, what nonsense is this you are telling me?" Mrs. Crawford said, reprovingly.

"It isn't nonsense, mamma, and I can prove it by this gentleman, who rescued me, just like some hero in a story would do."

Mrs. Crawford turned to Dick for verification of Ella's report.

"Can this be possible?" she asked.

"Your daughter's version of the affair is correct, as far as I know," Dick replied. "I saw her a captive, in the power of Ben Brice, and rescued her."

"What became of the ruffian?"

"I let him go, warning him not to show up again in Leadville, under penalty of arrest. If he comes back, it lies in your power to bring him to justice."

During the remainder of his visit to the Crawfords Dick was treated in the most hospitable manner.

He was pressed into staying to supper, and, in the mean time, while the repast was in course of preparation, Dick was introduced to "Jim," of whom Ella Crawford had spoken.

To Dick, Jim was a surprise.

Instead of being a six-footer, brawny, rough and hearty, Jim was the reverse. He was a pale, undersized young man, with light-blue eyes and enough tow-colored hair for three men.

"That's my Jim—my husband," Ella said—that is to be. Jim's an artist!"

Jim blushed to his ears, and made his escape as soon as possible.

"He's a *curio*," Ella laughed good-naturedly, when James had vanished. "He's spoony enough when we are alone, but when strangers are present he is awful bashful."

Supper was soon ready, and it was not until they were seated at the table that Dick observed a very handsome diamond brooch at the widow's throat.

He said nothing, but his unconsciously repeated glances at the brooch finally attracted Mrs. Crawford's attention.

"I see you are admiring my brooch, Mr. Bristol," she observed. "Is it not a pretty one?"

"It is indeed. The stones are particularly brilliant. It cost a round sum, I dare say?"

"I do not know. It is priceless to me, however, as it was a gift from my late husband. I have a necklace, however, which I recently purchased to help an acquaintance out of a financial strait, which I presume is worth much more. Are you a judge of diamonds, and their value, sir?"

"I am, by no means, an expert," Dick replied; "still I know a good diamond, when I see it."

"Ella, get the necklace, and Mr. Bristol shall pass opinion upon it. I think it is a beautiful thing," the widow said, handing her keys to her daughter, whereupon Ella hastened to obey her mother's bidding.

She soon returned, and placed in Dick's hands the necklace in question.

It was indeed a magnificent affair to look at, the gems being large and perfect, and dazzlingly brilliant.

Although not posted on the value of such an affair, Dick knew that the stones alone, unset, were a safe investment at one thousand dollars.

"How much do you think it is worth?" Mrs. Crawford asked. "I have no use for such jewelry as that, and if I could get a trifle above what I gave for it, I would sell it."

Dick's heart was beating faster as he handled the precious treasure.

Might not *this* be a part of the Cohen belongings, that had been confiscated by the road-agents?

"How much did you pay for this necklace?" he asked, without raising his eyes.

"Four hundred dollars. Do you think I got taken in?"

"By no means. It is worth more than that, but just how much more I am not prepared to say. I have a lady friend who would know the exact value, and if you wish to sell, I presume you would find in her a purchaser. Of whom did you obtain this necklace, may I inquire?"

"As to that, I am not at liberty to answer you," the widow replied, "as it was a little private transaction between ladies, and I was requested to mention no names."

Dick said no more, but returned the necklace to Ella, who left the room.

Dick now felt more than ever sure that he had hit upon a clew.

Instinct seemed to tell him that the necklace was a part of the stage-coach robbery.

This belief was strengthened, perhaps, by the secrecy concerning the sale and purchase of the jewels.

He did not remain long after supper, for he wished to get back to his room, and make some arrangements for the morrow.

Just as he was taking his departure, Mrs. Crawford remarked:

"By the way, Mr. Bristol, where will I find the young lady of whom you spoke in referring to the diamonds—the necklace?"

"If you like, I can send her to you," was the evasive reply. "I shall probably see her tomorrow."

"I should like it very much if you would ask her to call," Mrs. Crawford declared—"that is, if she would be a purchaser. Ella has no liking for display, such, for instance, as a valuable necklace like that, and I am too old."

"You are far from old, I should judge," Dick added, with a patronizing smile. "In fact, I have seen younger people much older in appearance. However, I will send the young lady to you, but I cannot promise that she will offer to purchase the necklace until you reveal from whom you received it. Business you know, in dealing in matters like that, is purely business."

And, with a light laugh, Dick ran down the steps, and hastened his departure, lest she should ply him with any more questions.

CHAPTER VI.

WEEDING OUT A CLEW.

THE next morning was dull.

If any one of my readers have ever been in the City of Leadville, they will know and appreciate what I mean by a dull morning in that mountain city.

The air was raw, the mountain-top was obscured in dense fog, which gradually and suffocatingly lowered; the aroma of everything was literally stifling.

A chill exchanged greetings with a warm wave, and then resumed rule with a vengeance.

The miners crept from their dens and darted into the inner recesses of the earth where all was at least warm and light, with cheerful complacency; the shopkeepers lazily opened their stores; and wondered how the day would turn out; the cocktail mixer had a busy time, and otherwise the town was very quiet.

Dick opened the pawnshop at the accustomed hour, and, having nothing else to do, engaged himself in the perusal of a novel.

"No one will be around to-day," he thought, and so dipped into the mysteries of the romance with a thorough sense of delight.

But before long, Billy Bucket showed up, somewhat pale and worried-looking.

"What is the matter Billy?" Dick demanded.

"Are you really sick?"

"Oh, I'm better'n a dozen dead kids yet!" the boy replied, sinking into a chair. "Kinder feel out o' sorts, but that ain't all. I'm sorter worried about somethin'!"

"Worried? What should worry you?"

"Well, I reckon ther's trouble brewin'. You remember that gal in the concert saloon, wot you was talkin' to?"

"You mean Edna Grey?"

"Yes."

"Well, what of her?"

"Yer see, when I was comin' down heer, I see'd thet feller, Ben Brice, an' thet woman, an' another person, all talkin' together, by the post-office. I know'd what ye told me about Brice's tryin' to kerry the gal off, and so I slid by, and made tracks for heer, to tell you. I hadn't much more than got half-way heer, when the woman overtook an' stopped me. She says to me, 'Tell your boss to keep lively on his guard, fer he's in danger!'"

"Edna Grey said this?"

"Tha's jist what she did."

"You said there were three persons talking together at the post-office?"

"Yes."

"Brice, Edna Grey, and—who else?"

"The coon, who calls himself Get-There-Eli."

"One of my most frequent customers," said Dick, meditatively. "That's odd, too. He has never pawned anything of particular value, and yet I cannot help thinking that, in him, we have struck a clew. Therefore, Billy, I will detail you to hunt him up and shadow him. In this way, we may get something definite to work upon."

"All right, boss, but, you kinder want to look out for yourself. Don't go without a pop in yer pocket. Remember Edna Grey's warning."

"Oh! mine young frient, I al look oud for mine-seluf. I don'd vas oftens go unarmed," Dick replied, with a smile. "Now petter you go look up dot Mister Johnsing, eh?"

"No need for that," replied Billy, making for the back room, "for I hope I may kick the bucket, if he don't come, now!"

And with that, he disappeared behind the scenes.

Sure enough, Get-There-Eli soon entered.

He was a ludicrous looking negro with a preponderance of fat, and black as the provincial ace of spades.

"Goot-morning, mine frient!" saluted Sam'l Jacobs. "You pe around pretty early, eh?"

"Yes, sah!" replied Get-There-Eli, with a gracious grin. "I is po'tic'larly an early bird, sah, but dar's no wurms to catch, dis mo'nin'. So my missus she hab to raise some money, an I tole her mebbe dat I could get it for her."

"Certainly, mine frient, certainly. Vot ish it you vant, dis mornin'?"

Get-There-Eli made no response, but took from his pocket a single unset stone of very large size, and fine cutting, and laid it on the counter.

Dick saw at a glance that it was a fine stone, and, after subjecting it to an inspection through a glass he found that it was without a flaw.

"Vare you got dis, mine frient?" he asked of the negro.

"From my missus, sah!" was the reply.

"She done sent me wid it."

"And who vas dot missus, vot sends you vit t'e diamond?"

"Dat I darsn't tell you, sah, 'cause missus don't want her name mentioned, sah. I se to pawn de diamond in my own name, sah, 'cause de missus am too proud to hab her identity revealed."

"Oh dat vas it! Vel, mine frient, I advance no monish on dat shewell, ontil I know who your misdress vas;—I cannot, so helb me, She-rusalem! You dells me who, gif you dot diamond, an' I lends you feefty dollars. You no vas dell me, I lends you nottiks!"

Johnson evidently did not relish this, for he shifted from one foot to another, uneasily.

"De missus skin me alibe, boss, if I was to gib her away!" he faltered.

"Dot vas none of my pizness," assured Mr. Jacobs. "Of you don'd want to gif it away, vy keep it, and I vil keep dot diamond!" Dick said, having possession of the stone. "Maybe you vas steal dot shewell?"

"De Good Lor' forbid!" Eli said, putting up his hands with a gesture calculated to assure his innocence. "I se too honest to steal, I is! My good missus gib me dat stone to pawn for her, fo' dead suah sart'in!"

"Vel, you not get dat stone back again, ontil you dells me vot your misdresses name is!" Dick said, positively.

Get-There-Eli was in a fix, and well he knew it.

He had been cautioned not to reveal the name of the diamond's owner, yet, how was he to help himself? In order to regain possession of the trophy, he must give some name.

Ah! some name! Why not a fictitious one as well as any other?

"Well, boss," he said, after a moment's hesitation, "I s'pose if I must, I must. De lady's name am Mrs. Mellin, an' she libs on J—street. Dar, now, is you satisfied? Gib me dat diamond, or de money."

"I'll gif you t'e money—feefty dollars, mine frient!" Dick replied.

And issuing a ticket for fifty dollars to "Mrs. Mellin," Dick gave it and the money to the darky, who at once took his departure, evidently in an unpleasant frame of mind.

Dick immediately summoned Billy Bucket.

"Off with you, now, and see where that nigger goes with the money, and find out who lives there."

"All right, boss. Here goes!" and Billy vanished to shadow the servant, while Dick locked up shop and started for J—street.

"I'm of the opinion that infernal negro lied to me, and I'm going to satisfy myself on that point."

J—street was soon reached and a few inquiries resulted in his finding the comfortable residence of Mrs. Mellin, the exterior of the place suggesting that the occupants were in well-to-do circumstances.

Dick's knock at the door was answered by a handsome, well-dressed woman of thirty-five.

"Pe you Mrs. Mellin?" Dick inquired.

"Yes, sir," the woman replied.

"My name is Jacobs, the pawnbroker," Dick

said. "A diamond of good value was pledged mit me this morning by a colored man named Johnson, who says you sent him. I calls now to make sure ef it be all right."

The lady looks expressed her intense surprise.

"There's not a word of truth in it!" she declared. "While I have diamonds, sir, I have no need to pawn them, as I have other ways of raising money."

"Thank y'ou!" Dick said; "dat's all." And tipping his hat, he took his departure.

"The nigger lied to me, as I thought!" he mused, as he made his way back to the pawnshop. "Raher than betray the party of whom he received the diamond, he substituted the name of Mrs. Mellin. But wait. Billy will soon be able to throw some light on the subject, I reckon."

When he reached the store, he found it open and Rachel Cohen awaiting him in the back room.

"You are late this morning," he observed.

"On the contrary, I was here two hours ago, but locked up again, and went away on an errand."

"Any news?"

"Yes. I have loaned fifty dollars on a diamond, already."

"To whom?"

"The coon, Eli Johnson," and Dick proceeded to explain the particulars of the case.

"Let me see the jewel," Rachel said. "If it is any one of those stolen from my father, I may be able to identify it."

Dick produced the gem, when Rachel took the glass, and inspected the jewel carefully, turning it over and over.

For several minutes she did not utter a word; then she uttered an ejaculation, as of recognition.

"I remember it perfectly well, now!" she said, excitedly. "It is undoubtedly one of the diamonds we were robbed of—my father and I."

"I don't see how you can tell, with any degree of certainty!" Dick declared, "the stone being unset."

"I'll tell you how I know," Rachel replied, "and it may prove a useful bit of information to you, in the future. All diamond cutters, in cutting a stone, to be turned over to the polisher, make the corners of the stone even numbers. No matter if the stone is to be cut is coarse or fine, and no matter how many corners there may be, the number will be even figures."

"Is there not an exception to this rule?"

"I have known of but two, one of which was a stone that came into father's possession, in New Orleans, and the other, this stone you received in pledge this morning. And, I am sure this is one of the stones we were robbed of, as the angles or corners foot up an odd number."

"It may be that you are right," Dick assented. "At any rate, I have sent Billy after the coon, and he will be pretty sure to bring back news of some sort."

He then related to Miss Cohen, concerning his yesterday's visit to the Crawfords, and how he had been shown the beautiful diamond necklace.

"I must see it, by all means," the Jewess said, excitedly. "There was such a necklace among the jewelry taken from us. I can tell if this one is the same, the moment I set eyes on it. I will go and see it without delay."

So she, too, soon after took her departure, and Dick was left alone, to await her return and that of Billy Bucket.

No more customers came to apply for loans, and so Mr. Jacobs returned to the perusal of his novel.

The forenoon passed and at noon a restaurateur brought Dick his regularly ordered dinner.

Afternoon came, and it was near three o'clock ere Billy Bucket put in an appearance.

"Well! well! my boy, what delayed you so long?" Dick asked, laying aside the book. "I was beginning to get worried lest harm had befallen you!"

"Needn't fret yerself about me!" the gamin replied. "I guess I know purty well how to take care o' this here old oaken Bucket. I've been follerin' a clew."

"Good! Let's hear about it!"

"Well, after I left this shebang, I follered the nigger. He didn't go much o' nowhere, at first, but kinder wandered about the streets, an' kept lookin' around behind him, as if he expected some one was follerin'. I kept as shady as I could, an' finally the nigger steered straight for a big house, over ag'in' the hill, and entered it, by the front door."

"O' course I couldn't foller him inter the

house very well, but I made up my mind to hang out about the neighborhood fer awhile, an' wait developments; an' I did so. I had a mighty long wait, but, finally, a boy went to the house, and left a letter there; an' as he kim away, I tackled him, and asked him who lived there. At first he was sassy, like, an' not inclined to tell, but, when I threatened to punch his head for him, he began to holler, and said as how a woman named Mrs. Redfern lived thar!"

"Mrs. Redfern?" Dick ejaculated, in surprise.

"Yas. I didn't take much stock in what the chub said, an' so I inquired of another chap, an' he kerroberated the statement."

"Well, I hung around for a while longer; then a woman cum out o' the house and started down-town, an' I follered. She was gallus dressed, but further than that she wasn't much for looks—sort of a tough-lookin' critter, who looked as if she'd jest as lief fight as eat."

"Well, she went to the post-office, an' appeared to be axin' for mail, but she didn't get any. When she cum out o' the office she dropped a letter. I picked it up, on course, an' put it inter my pocket. Then I shaddered her until I see'd her go home, when I come back here."

"Have you got the letter with you?"

"Heer it is," and he handed it to the now excited detective.

The superscription to the envelope was simply the address: "Mrs. Redfern, Leadville, Col.," in a man's chirography.

Drawing the letter from the envelope, Dick read the following:

"ROXIE:—

"Come to old Pop Pancake's to-night, and bring money. Must have it. Besides, I want to see you on business. Matters are gettin' unpleasantly warm. Yours to the death."

"BEN BRICE."

This was all, but to Dick it was very significant.

CHAPTER VII.

WHOM THE NECKLACE WAS OBTAINED FROM.

To Deadwood Dick, it seemed more than probable that he had struck the trail of the man and woman who had robbed and murdered Mr. Cohen, Rachel's father.

Here was the Redfern woman, to all intents pawning the stolen property, using the negro, Johnson, as a stool-pigeon to disguise her identity.

Here was Ben Brice, a ruffian and villain of the first water, appointing an interview with Mr. Redfern, ordering her to bring him money, and suggesting that matters were getting very warm for him.

Now Brice was a scoundrel, who would not stop at any evil act to further his aims and ends, and he and Mrs. Redfern being in collusion in a business way, what was more likely than that they were identified with the stage robbery?

From what he had seen of the Redfern woman at Mrs. Sheldon's, Dick knew her to be a treacherous, vicious person.

Was she not, then, a fit associate for the wretch, Ben Brice? Yes, she was; and the longer Deadwood Dick thought the matter over, the stronger became his convictions that Brice and Redfern had had all to do with the stage robbery and murder.

"Well, boss, how's your think?" demanded Billy, curious to know the meaning of his employer's protracted reverie.

"I think, my boy, that you've done more toward ferretting matters out than I have, myself!" Dick replied. "I think we are on the right track, now, and will soon corral the game."

"I hope so, boss. Who d'ye s'pect—the Redfern woman?"

"Yes, she for one."

"Who else?"

"Ben Brice. Did you see anything of him, when you were out, this last time?"

"No."

"Nor of Edna Grey."

"No."

"Well, I wish Miss Cohen would come, for I have some work to do myself, this afternoon, and to-night."

"Am I wid yer, boss?"

"No, I think I can do what I intend to do, better alone. You can go to a theater, if you like."

"Are ye goin' to that place mentioned in the letter—Pop Pancake's?"

"I am not yet decided. Why do you ask?"

"I wanted to know, so ef you was to get into trouble, and never show up, I would know where to look for you."

"Very thoughtful of you, Billy, and I thank you for it. I do not anticipate any trouble on that score. However, if I go I shall go well disguised."

Miss Cohen soon afterward put in an appearance.

"I saw Mrs. Crawford," she said, "and she showed me the necklace."

"Well?"

"It is the one that my father was robbed of!"

"You are sure?"

"Positive! I knew it the moment I set eyes upon it. It's real value is twenty-two hundred dollars."

"Did Mrs. Crawford offer to sell it to you?"

"Yes, at a great sacrifice, but I would not buy it, except on conditions, and she would not agree to them."

"In other words, she would not tell you from whom she purchased the jewels."

"She would not."

"Did you intimate to her that you recognized the jewels, or that they were stolen goods?"

"Oh, no; I was careful not to do that."

"Which shows your good sense!" Dick said, approvingly. "I will see Mrs. Crawford again, myself. In the mean time, do you think you and Billy can manage the store, for the balance of the day?"

"Certainly. Why?"

"Oh! I've a little clew, and want to run it out and see if there is anything in it."

"Of course. Billy and I can get along all right," Rachel assured.

And so, glad to get the rest of the day to himself, Dick took his departure.

His first action was to hasten to Mrs. Sheldon's and rid himself of his Jewish disguise, and dress up to represent his natural self.

He then returned to town, and visited the concert garden where he had first and last met Edna Grey.

But there was no concert in the afternoon, and she was not present.

He idled about town for awhile, and among other things made inquiries concerning Pop Pancake, referred to in Ben Brice's letter to Mrs. Redfern.

"Pop Pancake?" echoed the informant, who chanced to be one of the earlier settlers of Leadville. "What in thunder d'ye want o' him?"

"Nothing in partic'lar, only I want to find out what sort of a cuss he is, and where he lives."

"Wal, in the first place, he's the worst old reprobate in the mountains. He's a natteral born sneak thief, to begin with, and there's more than one mysterious murder been committed that's laid ag'in' him, tho' he's so crafty that nothin' could be proved ag'in' him. Finally, prejudice got so strong ag'in' him, that he was driven out o' the city, and ordered never to enter it ag'in. I guess he never has. But, he's done wuss. He built him a tavern a mile beyond city limits, just off the Oro road, and when the gamblers were barred out o' Leadville last Spring, a good many o' em has made Pop Pancake's shebang their hang-out, both men an' women, and business has been big, you bet! Men will gamble, and Pop's place offers a haven o' safety for both gamester and victim. Advise ye not to go thar, tho', fer it's a death-trap, mark my word!"

And with this well-meant warning, the informant walked away.

Deadwood Dick treated the "old settler's" adjuration with scarce a second thought, for had he not, on many an occasion, ventured into resorts equally as tough as Pop Pancake's was said to be?

His next move was to visit the Crawfords, and he was met at the door by Miss Ella, who greeted him pleasantly, and ushered him into the parlor, where her mother was seated.

Mrs. Crawford also received him graciously, and the first exchange of greetings over, she said:

"Your lady friend called to see the diamonds, Mr. Bristol!"

"So she told me. That is one thing which brings me here, now."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. Miss Cohen would purchase the necklace only for your refusal to tell from whom you received it."

"I am very sorry, sir, but I gave my word to keep secret from whom I bought the jewels, and it would be hardly right for me to break my promise."

"But, you must do it, Mrs. Crawford, whether it will be a pleasant thing for you to do, or not!"

"Must, sir?" and the lady flushed angrily.

"I am not aware, sir, that there is anything compulsory about the matter."

"On the contrary, there is. Either you must divulge the name of the party from whom you received the necklace, or, by refusing, you will be placing yourself in an unenviable light, and make yourself liable to arrest!"

"Arrest!" gasped Mrs. Crawford,—"arrest! And what for, pray?"

"Robbery, and holding in your possession, stolen goods!"

Mrs. Crawford and Ella both sprung to their feet, with cries of indignation and alarm.

"Mr. Bristol, I will hear no more of this!" the elder lady declared, angrily. "Either you must explain yourself, or leave my house!"

"If you will be kind enough to be seated, ladies, I will explain," Dick coolly replied. "I scarcely wonder at your taking offense, but I couldn't help speaking to the point."

The ladies resumed their seats, and Deadwood Dick resumed.

"The case is this: Some months ago a notable diamond robbery was perpetrated, and it is known that the robbers took refuge in this city. Recently, I, who am by profession a detective, was set to work on the case, and yesterday, by merest chance, found portions of the booty in your possession, in the shape of the diamond necklace. I felt that I had hit upon a clew, at last, and my suspicions were strengthened when you refused to divulge the name of the person from whom you purchased the necklace. To make sure that I had made no mistake in the identity of the necklace, I sent Miss Cohen to inspect, and she had no difficulty in identifying it, at sight!"

"And so you think I stole the necklace, do you?" Mrs. Crawford frigidly demanded.

"Nothing of the sort, madam. You are the last one I would suspect of such a crime!" Dick replied, candor, in his tone. "I have this to say, however—you owe it to your fair daughter, here, to protect yourself and her, rather than shield the person from whom you procured the necklace."

"Suppose I refuse to give her name?"

"Well, I'm afraid it would be an unpleasant thing for you to do. As an officer of the law, I should be required to arrest you on suspicion—a thing, believe me, I should sincerely dislike to do, after your kind hospitality of yesterday. Even did I refuse to take action against you, it could make no possible difference. Miss Cohen knows you have the necklace, and she could easily get some one to act in my place."

"You are in her employ, then?"

"I am."

"Does she own the necklace?"

"She does."

Then, after enjoining the ladies to secrecy, he gave them a brief outline of the stage robbery, and its result.

"Mr. Bristol!" said Mrs. Crawford, "you have acted perfectly right, and I see, now, that you had proper cause to suspect me as an accessory. The woman who sold me the diamonds is not an intimate acquaintance of mine, or no doubt I should feel worse about it. I had merely met her a few times, at social gatherings."

"Exactly. And now, her name?"

"She is called Mrs. Redfern. She has only been a resident of Leadville, for about a year."

"Thank you!" Dick said, with a smile.

"If you had told me this before, it would have saved you considerable annoyance. I have met Mrs. Redfern, already."

"Indeed? What do you think of her?"

"To tell the truth, my opinion is not very exalted," Dick replied with a shrug. "She is a woman whom I believe to be bad to the core. Has she ever offered to sell you any other diamonds?"

"She has not."

"Probably she's like the fish that never bites at the same bait twice?" Dick suggested, with a laugh.

"Then you suspect her of being an accessory to the robbery?"

"I do, most assuredly. Has Mrs. Redfern called on you often?"

"Of late, she has formed a habit of dropping in of a Tuesday evening, to play a social game of euchre, but it was without my asking, for I have had no desire to become on intimate terms with her. When she comes again, I shall give her to understand that she is not wanted."

"Pray do not do that just yet. When do you expect her again?"

"To-morrow night, most likely."

"Well, when she comes, treat her graciously, and get her into a game of cards. I will drop in during the evening disguised as a Southerner, and you can introduce me as your friend, Colo-

nel Cushing. I wish to study the woman closer, before taking any action against her, and this will afford me a good opportunity. You see I want to be sure of my game before I set my trap for it."

Mrs. Crawford bowed, but looked as if she felt a trifle uneasy.

"I don't know about that, Mr. Bristol," she said. "I really would not want any trouble to occur in my house, you know!"

"Certainly not. I shall be so cleverly disguised that Mrs. Redfern will not have the slightest suspicion as to who I am."

"Then you do not propose to arrest her, in my house."

"Indeed, no!"

"Oh! then I have no objections to your carrying out your plan. If the woman is really a thief, or a murderess, something surely ought to be done with her."

"Exactly!" Dick replied, "and I am the one who is going to do that something, as soon, as I get my trap ready. And, remember, now, I have enjoined you both to secrecy."

"Oh! certainly, we shall say nothing," Mrs. Crawford assured. Dick took his departure.

"Mrs. Redfern is of the culprits, without a doubt!" he mused, "and it would appear, from Brice's letter, that she has the boodle. One would have thought, he'd been sharp enough to secure his share."

"Well, the next thing on the programme, is to fix myself up for a visit to old Pop Pancake's place. I may be able to pick up considerable, there, that will be of use to me. Then, after seeing Mrs. Redfern at Mrs. Crawford's, I can probably form a definite plan of action."

CHAPTER VIII.

AT OLD POP PANCAKE'S "RED FLAG."

DICK accordingly hastened to the Sheldon cottage, where he arrived just in time for supper.

During supper he made a few inquiries.

"Mrs. Sheldon," he said, "do you know anything of the antecedents of Mrs. Redfern?"

"Not before they came to Leadville, a year ago."

"But you must know something about her since?"

"Very little, sir."

"She owns this house, does she not?"

"I suppose so," with a sigh. "She did not always own it, however. We once had it, clear."

She wiped the moisture from her eyes then, and went on:

"Yes, it is just about a year ago Mrs. Redfern came."

"Her husband appeared here a year before her. He was a pompous, self-important man, a fine dresser, and not bad-looking, and he introduced himself as the Honorable Raymond Redfern. The name stuck to him, but I could never see where the 'Honorable' came in, for he was one of the worst gamblers in these parts."

"I never knew this until it was too late. My husband, Sam, made Redfern's acquaintance, and was led into gambling. I used to notice he didn't bring as much money home as had been his custom, but I didn't say anything, for Sam was a hard worker, a good husband, and never came home intoxicated like miners."

"One day he came to me, and said: 'Mariah, there's a little piece o' ground up Gunner's Run, that I've discovered is chock-full of pay dirt. I'm the only one that knows it. I can buy the piece for a hundred, and sell it for a thousand inside of ten days, when it is known there's gold on it!'"

"I told my husband we hadn't the money to spare, but he said that would make no difference; if I would put my name to a note with him, he could raise the money."

"Well, I was ambitious, and wanted to see us get better off, so Sam wouldn't have to work so hard; so I signed the note—or at least I supposed it was a note. Alas! how should I know that it was nothing of the sort!"

"The next day poor Sam was killed by the premature explosion of a blast, and we were left almost penniless. He had only just enough insurance on his life to defray his funeral expenses. On top of all this sorrow and trouble, Raymond Redfern came forward to announce to us that he held a mortgage on our home, covering its full value, it having been given to him by my dead husband in payment of a gambling debt. As my signature was on the document, it was of course legal."

"I will not tire you by rehearsing to you our terrible grief and consternation. Mr. Redfern, though a gambler, was not wholly without a

heart, and he told us we could remain here and have as long time as we wanted to pay off the mortgage. So Susie and I set energetically to work, and have managed to keep the wolf from the door, and that's about all that can be said."

"You've had a hard time of it, indeed," Dick said, sympathizingly. "By the way, is this Redfern living?"

"No. He was killed four months ago. His wife came on to join him about the same time my husband was killed; but, from the day of her arrival, Redfern seemed to go straight downhill. He drank like a fish, neglected his hitherto faultless dress, and sought the very lowest associations—in fact, became a ruffian of the worst stamp. He would shoot and stab at little or no provocation, and several men met their death at his hands. They do say he at last took to highway robbery; anyhow, he tried to rob a man out on Oro road about four months ago, and was shot dead. It was not until after this that I met his wife. She came to me and said I would have to pay rent or get out, and, rather than leave the old house, we concluded to submit to her tyranny."

"But, she's been a hard woman to deal with."

"Such was Mrs. Sheldon's story of Raymond Redfern, and it set Deadwood Dick to thinking."

"May it not have been Redfern and his wife who were the road-agents?" he mused, when alone in his room, "and may I not be doing Ben Brice an injustice by suspecting him of having had a hand in the transaction? It may be so, but, even so, Brice is none too good for such a crime."

It was now getting dark, and so, lighting a lamp, Dick set about disguising himself for that evening's adventure.

We will pass over the details of the process of making up, and view him afterward.

He wore a wig of black hair, that fell back over his shoulder, and reached half-way to his waist. He also wore a heavy black mustache and goatee, and his skin was dyed a nut brown.

He was attired in a complete suit of white duck, with white shirt, in whose bosom sparkled a handsome diamond, and a white sombrero upon his head. His feet were incased in patent-leather boots, and he carried a gold-headed cane.

In a belt about his waist were two handsome revolvers.

He looked like a well-to-do Southwestern gentleman of Spanish-American extraction; at any rate, his guise would certainly not have been penetrated by his most intimate friend.

"I guess I'll pass," he mused, surveying himself in the glass. "I don't think even Edna Grey would know me now."

Before leaving the house he took a new pack of playing-cards from his pocket, and sorting them over, he picked out the ace of diamonds, and returned the remainder of the pack to the trunk.

Then, with a keen-edged knife, he dextrously cut the ace from the center of the card, leaving a diamond-shaped aperture.

Putting the card in his pocket, he left the house, and set out for Pop Pancake's den.

From inquiries he had made, he presumed he would have little difficulty in finding the place.

It was about two miles from Mrs. Sheldon's (whose house stood near the city line), and was situated two hundred yards from the Oro trail to the southward.

As it could be seen from the trail, there was little danger of missing the place.

The distance being only two miles, Dick concluded to make the journey on foot.

The night was extremely dark, the sky being overcast with clouds that bespoke rain.

Indeed, it was about time for the regular rainy season of autumn to begin.

Dick was a rapid walker, and covered the two miles in good time, and without interruption or accident.

He soon spied a long, low log cabin, standing off some little distance from the road. Its many little windows were ablaze with light.

"I reckon that's the place," Dick decided; "anyhow, here goes."

Striking into a narrow path that led from the main road, he advanced toward the cabin. He soon reached it, and without waiting for ceremony opened the door and entered.

He found himself in a room that comprised the entire interior of the building, with exception of a small curtained space at the further end.

The floor was of well-trampled clay and the walls and ceiling were in the rough.

At one side of the room was a bar, and the remainder of the space was pretty well filled up with tables and rude stools, and various

gambling paraphernalia, including a faro table, roulette and keno lay-outs, and a wheel of fortune.

There were perhaps fifty men and women in the room when Dick entered, the latter being professionals, who derived their living from gambling.

As a rule, the company assembled were not very tough-looking—not the desperate ruffianly element Dick had expected to find.

About the toughest-looking customer in the place was the man behind the bar, who, Dick at once concluded, was the proprietor of the shebang, old Pop Pancake.

He stood six feet in his boots, was brawny and muscular, and looked as if he might be able to whip his weight in wild-cats. His face was not remarkable for its beauty, being covered with sores, and minus one eye, while his nose was flattened almost even with his face.

Dick's entrance seemed to attract the attention of nearly every one, for, as yet, no games of any account had been commenced.

Evidently gentlemen of Dick's dandified appearance were not frequent visitors at the Red Flag.

Without paying any attention to the crowd, Dick advanced to the bar and called for a drink.

As he did so, he felt a touch on his elbow, and looking around, found Ben Brice leaning against the bar, alongside him.

"Hello, stranger!" he cried, with a leer, "ye bean't goin' to drink alone, are ye?"

"Why, no, not if you'll join me!" Dick replied.

"Wa-al, I reckon I will!" Brice declared.

"Mine's whisky, Pop. An', by ther way, Cap, the crowd ginneraley drinks when I do, an' ef ye want ter get along well around this shebang, I'd advise ye to invite 'em up!"

Dick felt like giving the ruffian a punch in the jaw for his audacity, but he knew that would not be practicable, under the circumstances; so, glancing over the crowd, and estimating the cost of a treat, he said:

"All right, call 'em up!"

"Who shall I tell 'em as invites 'em to crook their elbow, Cap?"

"Oh! tell them whatever you like—odds the difference to me. Jim Cushing will do as well as any name!"

"Ladies and gentlemen, Senor Jim Cushing invites you to oil up your machinery at his expense, if you please. And you, Pop Pancake, do you hump yourself, and dish out the best liquid depravity!"

Unnecessary to say the crowd did not refuse the invitation, but crowded along the bar like a swarm of bees, women and all.

Dick quickly dispatched his beverage, and got back out of line.

The crowd finally all got their drinks, and Pop Pancake reminded the stranger that ten dollars would settle the damages.

"Cheap enough!" Dick replied, and paid the bill.

Then, lighting a cigar, he went and sat down at a vacant table, where he was soon joined by Ben Brice, who helped himself to a chair.

"Stranger around these diggin's, eh?" he queried, filling his pipe.

"Rather," was the reply.

"Come from Mexico?"

"No, from Texas. What makes you think I came from Mexico?"

"You look like a Spaniard."

"Because I am browned up eh? Oh! no. I'm clear United States. I'm in the cattle business."

"Ye don't say? Got a big herd?"

"Pretty fair."

"You're a widower, I take it?"

"No—a bachelor."

"The devil you say!" ejaculated Brice, with well feigned astonishment.

"It's a wonder ye don't hitch up wi' some good looking woman."

"Good looks don't go far in my estimation. If it should ever fall to my lot to marry, as it probably will not, I want a business woman, with some sugar of her own, so that I wouldn't have to be bothered with applications for pin and ribbon money, every ten minutes."

"That's where yer head is level, and I'll bet I know the very woman as would suit ye!" Brice said, slapping his knee, enthusiastically. "She ain't much for looks, but she's got the sugar, and, when et comes down to business, she's thar!"

Dick took the cue, in an instant.

Brice wanted to work Mrs. Redfern off on him!

"I should be only too happy to meet her," he said.

"I reckon you'll have a chance, to-night!"

Brice declared. "Ye see, it's this way: Me an' the Leadville police ain't on the best o' terms, and I'm sorter ostracized from society. So, as I have to do business for the widow, she has to come here to see me. I'll introduce you, when she comes."

"Thank you!" Dick said, with apparent heartiness. "Just tell the bartender to bring us a couple of more drinks."

Brice gave the order without the least reluctance. He seemed highly elated at the new acquaintance he had made, and was probably saying to himself:

"Here's another fat sucker, and we'll work him for all he is worth!"

"Do you speak or understand any of the foreign languages, pard?" Brice asked, after the beverages had been dispatched.

"Unfortunately, no," Dick replied. "Straight United States has always been good enough for me, and I dare say always will be."

"I didn't know," Brice said, apologetically. "Ther lady I shall introduce ye to sometimes speaks a little French, you know, and I didn't know but what you might."

As the hour of ten approached, a woman clad in black entered the saloon. She was deeply veiled, but, for all that, Dick had no difficulty in recognizing her as Mrs. Redfern.

She hesitated, then advanced, and touched Brice on the shoulder.

"Ah! good-evening, widow!" the ruffian said, rising and offering her his stool. "Pray sit down; but, hold! First let me introduce you to my friend, Mr. Jim Cushing, of Texas. Mr. Cushing, this is Mrs. Redfern."

"Delighted to meet you, Mrs. Redfern," Dick declared, rising and bowing gallantly.

Then all three became seated, and Dick ordered a bottle of wine, but as Pop Pancake dabbled in nothing but "bug-juice," Brice and Mrs. Redfern took whisky, while Dick lit a cigar.

"From what part of Texas do you come, Mr. Cushing?" the widow asked, after she had drained her glass at a gulp.

"From the northwestern part."

"You are somewhat of a stranger here, I take it?"

"Yes, almost entirely so."

"Do you intend remaining here long?"

"That depends somewhat on whether I see a favorable chance for investment or not," Dick replied.

Mrs. Redfern then addressed Brice:

"Does he speak French?" she asked, in that language.

"Not a word, nor does he understand it. He's some Yank, I reckon, who's made his pile in the cattle business, and is traveling around and taking it easy. We want to work him for all he's worth."

"You're right," the widow replied with a shrug.

Then turning to Mr. Cushing, she said:

"I trust you will excuse us for speaking in French. We have a little private business you see, and—"

"Oh, certainly! certainly!" Dick hastened to reply. "It does not worry me in the least," and averting his face, he engaged himself ostensibly in watching those around him; but his ears were wide open, so to speak, and although he could not speak the French language, he could understand it quite well. It was, he decided, a remarkable opportunity to overhear what transpired between the two conspirators.

Mrs. Redfern now directed her attention and remarks to Brice, both of them speaking in French.

"Well, I got your letter, and I have come here, Ben, at the risk of my reputation," Mrs. Redfern said, severely. "Now what do you want?"

"Money," the other replied, laconically.

"Money, eh? Where's the hundred dollars I gave you a few days ago?"

"Gone, every cent of it!" grimly. "Blowed it all in playing bank."

"Didn't I tell you you'd have to make that last you?"

"I don't remember. If you did, it wouldn't make any difference. When I want money, I am going to have it, and you know it."

"I'm afraid you'll have to look in another direction for it, then. I'm tired of your demands, and besides that, what ready money I had, I've invested."

"Go off! None of your ghost stories! You knew better than to come here without money in your pocket. You dared not come without it!"

"I dared not, eh?"

"No, you dared not, eh?"

"And why not, pray?"

"I suppose you know there's a detective in town?"

"A man, named Bristol?"

"Yes—otherwise Deadwood Dick. He's the shrewdest weasel in the whole West."

"Well, what of that?"

"A good deal, maybe!"

The woman gave a furtive glance at Jim Cushing.

"Oh! he's all right!" Brice averred with a shrug. "This chap I speak of is a younger man. I know him. I had a tilt with him, and have got to lie low until I can get a safe whack at him. Then I'll send him on a detective mission to another world. But, come, now! am I to have the money or not? If I get it I've something more to tell you. If not, my mouth is glued shut!"

"How much do you want?"

"A hundred dollars will do me for the present."

"Ben, I'll scrimp myself, and give you the money, if you will promise not to ask me for any more, for a month at least!"

"I never make rash promises, which I cannot keep, Roxie. I'll agree to make the money go as far as possible, however!"

Mrs. Redfern glared at him a moment as if she would willingly annihilate him, if she could.

During all this time, Dick had appeared not to pay the slightest attention to what was passing between the two.

Mrs. Redfern now took a roll of bills from the pocket of her dress, and counting out a sum of money shoved it across the table to Brice.

"Take it!" she said, sharply. "You can bet your life you'll not get any more, very soon. Now, what more is it you have to tell me?"

"I merely want to warn you of something!"

"What?"

"Keep clear of the new pawnshop!"

The widow gave a nervous start.

"Why?" she demanded, eagerly.

Brice answered her, but spoke in German, of which Dick could not understand a word.

The remainder of the conversation between Brice and the woman was carried on in the same tongue, and seemed to be of an interesting nature.

At last Mrs. Redfern arose to go, and turned to Dick.

"I am sorry, Mr. Cushing," she said, "that I shall have to go, without having had time further to cultivate your acquaintance. However, if you will do me the honor to pay me a call, while in the city, I will be happy to receive you. I have some relatives, in Texas, and you might be able to tell me something of them."

"It is possible!" Dick replied, "and perhaps I may find time to accept your kind invitation."

Mrs. Redfern said good-night, and drawing the veil closely over her face, left the resort.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ACE OF DIAMONDS RACKET.

BOTH Mr. Cushing and Ben Brice gazed after Mrs. Redfern, until she was gone, then Brice turned with a grim "humph!"

"Queer woman to work for!" he observed. "Good enough pay, but, one hes got to hev jest so much parley with her, before he kin get his pay."

"Any relation of yours?" Dick casually asked.

"No. I used to know her before she got married, don't you see?"

"Ah! yes. Well, I think I'll be getting back toward the city, as there don't seem to be much doing here, to-night."

"Don't be in a hurry. It's early yet. Look, yonder is a poker game starting up. If you say so, I'll get us a couple of seats in the game. I've a few V's to lose. What say? Them fellers are new here!"

"Oh! I'm agreeable!" Dick replied.

Accordingly Brice went over to the table and gained permission, and, as a result, he and Mr. Cushing were soon seated at the table, making five that were to play.

It was agreed that each man was to take one hundred chips, valued at one dollar each, and the limit to the betting was to be fifty dollars a hand—freeze-out game.

Brice won the choice of deal, and one of the other men, Kelsey by name, took the pot. Betting was small.

It was Dick's next deal, and, with the cleverness of an expert, he extracted the ace of diamonds from the pack, threw it under the table,

and inserted his own ace of diamonds in the pack—the one he had prepared before leaving his room.

The cards were then dealt, and, after rather careful betting, won by a man named Shark—a name that fitted him well, for it soon developed that he was an expert with the cards.

Shark dealt next.

The betting was to the limit, both Shark and Brice staying in.

Dick won on a straight flush.

As yet the ace of diamonds had not appeared—a most singular coincidence, it seemed to Dick.

Luck soon began to run one way, and soon Kelsey and his friend were out of the game, and out a hundred each.

Dick still remained in, but his pile of chips were beginning to look "sick."

Brice and Shark were having the luck.

And still the tampered-with ace of diamonds did not appear!

Finally Dick was froze out, also a hundred dollars the loser.

It now remained for Brice and Shark to fight it out, for the consolidated pot of five hundred dollars, and the game promised to be exciting.

"Well, I'm glad I'm out of it, for I've no luck to-night!" Dick declared. "Ah! there goes my handkerchief on the floor."

He stooped and picked it up, and with it the ace of diamonds he had discarded, which, unnoticed, he deftly shoved up his sleeve. "I think I'll get a cigar, watch the game out, and then go to Leadville."

He arose from the table, went to the bar, and ordered a cigar.

Here he again dropped his handkerchief, and, in stooping to pick it up, dexterously inserted the card he had up his sleeve, in under the spittoon.

Lighting the cigar, he returned to the poker table, and found that, by mutual agreement, the limit had been removed, and each player was at liberty to bet his pile of chips on a single hand, if he felt so inclined.

But where was the ace of diamonds Dick had inserted in the pack?

Was it not to appear, ere one or the other of the contestants had come off victorious?

Now, seated across the table from Brice, Deadwood Dick waited, anxiously.

Brice was holding the hands, and scooping in pot after pot, in spite of Shark's dextrous manipulation of the cards, when it came his deal.

"Oh! I'll soon have you cleaned out!" the former said, with a chuckle.

And indeed, it did look so, for a time; but, as the old saying goes, it is a long lane that has no turn.

Another deal, and the aspect of affairs underwent a change.

Brice was dealing, and dealt Shark the ace of diamonds, minus the center red spot, which as the reader knows, had been cut out.

"Hello!" cried Shark, holding up his card, "what kind of shennanigan is this? Here's an ace of diamonds with the ace cut out, and nothing left but a diamond-shaped hole. Now, kin any one o' ye tell what that means? Who's bin monkeyin' wi' these cards?"

"Let me see that," cried Ben Brice, snatching the card. He placed it upon the table, face up, and stared at it a moment, as if struck dumb with amazement, his face grown suddenly very pale, and great beads of perspiration standing out upon his forehead.

Suddenly he leaped to his feet, with a string of horrible oaths.

"Ye'r right!" his face aflame with rage. "Them thar cards hev been tampered with. An' now, I want ter jest find out which one o' ye did it, 'til I bore him so full o' holes he'll answer fer a sieve?"

And he glared from one to the other of those who had been in the game.

"It could not possibly have been any one of the players!" Mr. Cushing remarked, "for what one of us could deliberately pick the ace of diamonds from the pack, while playing, and in the presence of the others, and cut out the ace, and write on the card, then restore it to the pack, without being discovered? I tell you, gentlemen, such a thing would be the height of impossibility!"

This was a poser. None could gainsay the argument.

"The fault probably lies with the maker of the cards," suggested Kelsey.

"That is not possible," Dick assumed.

"These cards were manufactured by Dougherty, of New York, who annually turns out hundreds of thousands of packs. How could he or any of his employees know that this particular

pack was coming here, and, as a joke, cut out the ace, write "Of Leadville" underneath, and be sure the pack containing the card would come here? Again, if you will observe the back of the cards, you will see that the cut card belongs to a different pack from those we were playing with. Was it a new pack, Mr. Shark?"

"Yes. I selected and purchased it before the game began."

"Then, gentlemen, there is but one construction to put upon the matter!" Mr. Cushing declared, with utmost coolness. "The very fact that the card did not appear when Mr. Kelsey, Mr. Bush and myself were in the game, proves that it must have been slipped into the pack after we were froze out. Therefore, I wash my hands of the whole affair. You two interested parties must settle the matter of the stakes between yourselves."

And turning, Dick procured a fresh cigar at the bar, and left the saloon, striking out at once for Leadville.

It was not until he was a good distance from the "Red Flag" that he burst into a laugh.

"Well, I'll be blowed if that card business didn't rather knock 'em silly!" he soliloquized.

"Even the fly Mr. Shark was dumfounded, for I saw him running the cards over, to make sure they were correct, before we began to play. Well, it cost me a hundred dollars, but what I have learned is worth it."

"Mrs. Redfern is the moneyed party, and there's no longer any doubt in my mind that she was concerned in the stage robbery. As for Brice, I'm not so sure whether he had a hand in the robbery or not. At any rate, he has a pull on the Redfern woman, for money, and she doesn't refuse him. Moreover, when he addressed her in German, in reference to the pawnshop, I think he told her that I was there, playing the role of Jacobs. If so, that jig is up."

Well, I've got all day to-morrow before me, to think matters over, and to form my plans. Before arresting Mrs. Redfern, I want to obtain some more positive evidence against her, so that there will be no trouble in securing her absolute conviction. I will see her at the Crawfords', no doubt, and if I play my cards well, may get her mashed on me. Ha! ha!"

CHAPTER X.

MICHAELS "GIVES IN."

DICK did not go to the pawnshop the next morning, but sent a note by Billy Bucket, requesting Rachel to meet him at noon, at the restaurant where they had met when Dick was engaged in her service.

Toward noon he made his toilet, and set out for the place designated.

Rachel was already there, at a private table, and Dick, taking a seat opposite her, ordered his dinner.

"Well, Mr. Bristol, why did you not come to the store this morning?" Rachel asked, pleasantly. "I was quite disappointed not to see you back behind the counter again."

"That game is played out!" Dick replied, "and it's no use for me to twist my tongue out of joint any more, by way of acting the role of Sam'l Jacobs."

"Why not?"

"Because it won't work. The enemy has uncovered our position."

"Have you found them?"

"I've located one of them—that is, I am pretty sure I have, but I can't take action until I have proof convincing."

"Who is the one suspected?"

"A Mrs. Redfern," and he proceeded to relate the particulars of the interview with the Crawfords.

"Do you suspect any one else?" Rachel asked.

"Ben Brice knows something about the stage-coach robbery, but just how much I do not know. I am not of the opinion, however, that he took a hand in the attack; but, by playing my cards carefully, I may be able to use him as evidence against the Redfern woman."

"Well, what are you going to do next?"

"Collect all the evidence I can. I want you to take me to the pawnbroker who has your father's watch."

"Oh, Michaels!"

"Yes. I'm going to compel him to tell me who pawned it."

"I don't believe you can."

"But I will!"

"He is very stubborn."

"So am I. He will tell me who pawned that watch, or I'll lock him up!"

So, dinner finished, they repaired to the pawnshop of Mr. Michaels, and found that gentleman "at home."

Michaels was a thin, hard-faced man, with restless little eyes. He did not look very much like a Jew, however.

"Mr. Michaels," Rachel said, "I want to have another look at the watch you showed me some few days ago."

"Certainly, young lady, certainly. You want to buy dot vatch, maybe?" and the broker gave Dick an inquiring glance.

The watch was produced, and Rachel handed it to Dick.

It was a massive affair, and worth a good deal of money. The late Mr. Cohen's name was engraved upon the back case.

"Michaels," said Dick, "where did you get this watch?"

"It vos pawned with me, sare."

"Who pawned it?"

"I don't remember dot name now, no more, id vas so long ago."

"Do you know this is stolen property?"

"No, I don't know dot. Besides, I cannot helb dot. Peoples come to me and pawn t'ings, und if dey vas stolen I cannot helb dot. I vas not to plame!"

"Now, look here, Michaels, I want to tell you something. I am a detective, and an officer, and I mean business. I want to know who pawned that watch. You had better tell me, and save yourself trouble."

"Mine frient, how can I tell you when I have forgotten?"

"Go search up your records, then, and find out!"

"Mine frient, I have no records."

"You have no records? The law requires you to keep a record of your transactions!"

"Dot law vas no goot. I no botter mine head vid it. Ven I loans money, I gifs a ticket. Ven dot ticket comes back, vid de money and my brofit added, I returns der goots. No, no! mine frient, I forget who pawns dot vatch, so helb me! I haf one very pad memories!"

"I think myself your memory needs a strengthening poultice," Dick remarked, taking a pair of handcuffs from his pocket. "You come along with me to the lock-up, Michaels, and when you are shut up in a nice cool cell, and free from business cares, I've no doubt your memory will return to you."

"No! no!" cried the broker, in abject terror, "I cannot go to shail—I vil not go to shail! I vil die first. Now, shust vait—shust vait till I tink. Maype dot name vil come back to me all at vonce!"

Dick turned to Rachel with a smile.

"Nothing like a pair of handcuffs to liven up one's defective memory! Here! you take the watch and keep it. It is yours."

"I have it! I have it! I have it!" excitedly cried the man of pledges. "I have it, so helb me!"

"Keep a tight hold of it, and don't let it get away from you!" urged Dick.

"No! no! you don't vas understandt me. I haf got dot name!"

"Well, what is it? Spit it out."

"It vas Redfern—Meesus Redfern dot lif py der bill over yonder!"

"Correct, Michaels. I could have told you that long ago. Well, good-by! Much obliged for the information. Come, Miss Cohen."

"Holdt on! holdt on! De vatch—you have got de vatch!"

"Why, of course we have!" Dick returned.

"The watch belongs to Miss Cohen, and she has a perfect right to take it with her!"

"But, mine monish! mine monish! gif me dot. I pay mine monish on dot vatch, so helb me!"

"Oh, you go up your spout! You paid nothing!"

"I did! I did! I pay mine monish on dot vatch, an' I vant it or I sue you!"

"Ho! ho! you will, eh? 'Dot law vas no goot, Michaels—no goot at all!'—you assured me. Besides, you have no records to prove you ever had such a watch in your possession. Goot-day, Meester Michaels—goot-day!"

And then with a tantalizing laugh, Dick followed Rachel from the store, leaving the discomfited broker in a state bordering on frenzy.

"Another clincher against Mrs. Redfern!" Dick remarked.

"Oh! I am so glad you are succeeding so well, Mr. Bristol. I felt confident you would, in the start. And, now, Mr. Bristol, I want you to accept this watch as a present from me—not as any part of the proper remuneration for your professional services, but as a testimonial of my esteem. It was my poor father's, 'tis true, but it is too large for me to wear, and it will please me greatly if you will accept of it."

"I will do so, with the keenest pleasure, Miss

Cohen, and will always keep it as a token of remembrance of our novel partnership in the pawnbroking business!"

They soon separated, Rachel going to her store, and Dick wandering about town, wondering vaguely what would be the nature of the next development in that novel game of hide and seek.

CHAPTER XI.

POOR EDNA!

DURING his rambles that afternoon, Dick chanced to drop into the concert saloon where he had met Edna Grey, the first night of his arrival in Leadville.

There was no performance, but some of the specialty people were grouped about the place, chatting together, and from the topic of conversation, Dick learned that it was salary day, and there was some speculation among the performers as to whether or not the "ghost would walk" with his accustomed promptness.

Business had been dull, and there seemed to be good reason to expect a collapse.

Among the performers present was Edna Grey, clad in a plain black dress and jaunty straw hat, and looking even prettier than when Dick had first seen her.

She did not notice the detective on his entrance, so he seated himself at one of the tables, and ordering a glass of beer, took a newspaper from his pocket and made a pretense of reading, but in reality waiting to see if Edna would come and speak to him.

She was not long in discovering his presence, and leaving the group with whom she had been conversing, came over and paused beside him.

"How do you do, Mr. Bristol?" she saluted.

"I trust you are in good health."

"Never was in better," Dick replied. "But you, Edna—you are looking pale?"

"This sort of life is enough to make one look pale," she said, with a sigh.

"It is not as bright as it is pictured, then?"

Dick interrogated.

"Indeed it is not. If I could only teach other girls the lesson I've been taught by going on the stage, I could save them many days—ay! years of suffering. Did you get the message I sent by your young apprentice, Mr. Bristol?"

"I did, and while it was very kind of you to interest yourself in my behalf, it was really scarcely worth your while, for I'm not afraid of Ben Brice, nor dread any harm he can do me."

"Maybe not—that's because you don't know him; he is a bad, desperate man."

"That may be, too. But I've met worse ruffians. By the way, Miss Grey, did you tell him about my being in the pawnbroking business? You must have betrayed my identity, or he would not have found out so soon."

"I did. But it was only to save my life that I did so. That night, after you knocked him down, Ben pounded me because I talked with you, and the next night he threw me on the floor, and threatened to murder me if I didn't tell him all I knew about you. So I told him you were a detective. He probably saw you at the pawnshop, and surmised the rest."

"What is Ben Brice to you, that he should dare take such liberties?"

"He is my husband!"

"Your husband?"

"Alas! yes."

"In the name of God, whatever possessed you to marry that man—that beastly ruffian?" Dick demanded.

"I don't know. I think I must have been insane at the time. But it is too late, now, and there's no use of crying over spilled milk. I've made my bed, and I suppose I must lay in it."

"You have seen better days, I infer!"

"Better days?—ah! yes, so much better days, as light is better than densest darkness. If I had only thought so, before I took the fatal step, I would not be here now!"

She sunk upon a chair, by the table, and buried her face in her hands, while her figure shook with emotion. When she looked up, a moment later, her eyes were tearless, but there was a pained expression of silent agony upon her face.

"Won't you tell me your story?" Dick said, in a kindly tone. "I may be able to help you."

"No, I'm past help. However, I'll tell you my story, what little there is of it. I come of a staid old New England family—people of the straight-laced, orthodox Methodist stock, and strict church people—people who rarely smiled at any of the vanities of life, and to whom a dance was the devil's carousal, and the theater was hell itself.

"Mine was a different nature from theirs. I was born light-hearted and with a natural tendency to look on the bright side of life to ad-

mire and be admired. From early childhood I loved society, and there was born in me a passion to become an actress, or in fact, anything appertaining to a 'show,' as country people term all classes of amusements. But my people always kept me down under the most rigid discipline, and I never knew really what a show consisted of, until three years ago, when my parents moved to Mexico, Missouri. It was there that, on the sly, I saw the first circus of my life, and was saved from being trampled under the elephant's feet, by Ben Brice, the animal trainer. Would to God, now, that he had not come to my rescue!

"Brice was a far better looking man, then, than now, and of course I was grateful to him for saving my life, while, for his part, he seemed to fall desperately in love with me, at first sight, and promised me if I would run away with him and marry him, he would put me on the stage, when the circus season was over, and make a great star of me.

"Although his words filled me with visions of future greatness, I did not promise him, just then, and that night the circus moved to Hannibal.

"When I went home, my father had learned of my being at the circus, and gave me a terrible flogging. Although that was three years ago, and I was as big then, as I am now, I still bear upon my body the scar from one of the merciless blows from his cruel whip. But, it was the last blow he ever struck me, or ever will. Religion may be good enough, in a mild form, but when united with brutality, I want none of it! I fled from home that very night.

"I overtook the circus at Hannibal, married Ben Brice, and traveled with the show until the season closed. Then we came to Leadville, and have been here since. God only knows the hardships and sufferings I have endured. Even as you called him, Brice has turned out to be a beastly ruffian, and I both fear and loathe him!"

"Have you heard nothing from your parents, since you left home?"

"Not until a week ago, when, by chance, I met a merchant from Mexico. He told me that my father died a year ago, and that my mother is an invalid, and is constantly calling for me to come home, and be forgiven!"

And here the poor girl buried her face in her hands again, and burst into tears.

"Please don't cry, Miss Grey," Dick pleaded, considerably affected. "Perhaps I can help you. Why don't you leave this wretch, Brice, who is so unworthy of you, and go back to your mother?"

"Oh, sir, if I only could I would go to-night; but I cannot."

"Why?"

"Because I have not the means. All, or nearly all, I earn here, Brice takes from me. Time and again have I tried to save up a little, but he always found it out and made me give the money to him."

"Then you would go back to your mother if you had the means?"

"Indeed I would!"

"I think about twenty dollars would take you home, would it not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. I'm not a millionaire, by any means, but I am always willing to help the deserving. On one condition I will supply you with the necessary funds to reach your home."

"And that condition—what is it?"

"That you will truthfully answer me a question."

"Of course I will, if I can do so. I have no secrets, so why should I hesitate?"

"Very well. This is what I want to know: Did Ben Brice have a hand in the stage-robbery about six months ago, and in the murder of old man Cohen?"

Edna shook her head.

"No, he did not; I can assure you of that, for he was sick abed with delirium tremens at the time that affair happened."

"Yet he knows something about it?"

"I cannot say as to that, for he never made me a confidante of his secrets. That he was not one of the stage-robbers, however, I can swear."

"Very well. You have told me the truth, I have no doubt, and now I will keep my promise."

Taking a roll of money from his pocket, he counted out three ten-dollar notes, and extended them to her.

"Take them," he said, "and go back to your mother. Be a comfort to her in her declining years, and if it is of any account, may a detective's blessing go with you!"

It was several minutes before Edna could find her voice, so great was her emotion.

Finally she said, in a low tone:

"It is I who should bless you, Mr. Bristol, for you have put it in my power to once more see my dear old mother. I am sure I shall never forget your kindness, even though I may never be able to repay you."

Dick arose and took her hand.

"No repayment is expected," he said. "If I shall have been the means of brightening your future life, I will have had my reward. A kindly remembrance is far more valuable to me than money. Now, lose no time in leaving Leadville, Miss Grey, and God be with you. Good-by!"

"Good-by, Mr. Bristol!" Edna sobbed, tears flowing down her cheeks; and, pressing her hand warmly, Dick turned and left the saloon.

Scarcely necessary to add that Edna Grey was not on the boards that night at the concert garden, and people wondered why.

CHAPTER XII.

SHIELDING A CRIMINAL.

It was pitch dark when Dick reached the Widow Sheldon's, and supper was waiting for him.

The good widow was certainly doing all in her power to make things pleasant for him.

After supper, Dick retired to his room, to make preparations for his visit to Mrs. Crawford's.

Billy Bucket had not yet come home from the pawnshop, and was not likely to, for an hour yet.

Dick had, during the day, sent a note to Mrs. Crawford, describing what his appearance would be, when he called, in the evening.

He had scarcely laid out his clothes and other things, preparatory to disguising himself, when there came a violent rap on the door.

"I wonder who that can be?" Dick muttered. "It didn't sound at all like Billy's rap!"

Going to the door, he flung it wide open.

"Who's there?" he demanded.

For answer a man rushed past him, into the room—a wild-eyed, hatless man, covered with blood.

It was Ben Brice!

"For God's sake, shut that door, quick!" he cried. "Hide me! hide me or they will string me up!"

"They? Who?"

"The mob! There's a hundred of 'em! They'll be here in a minute. Oh! detective, hide me! My life is worth more to you than it is to them! I can tell you all you want to know about the Cohen murder! Hide me, for the love you bore your mother, I pray of you!"

And, strong man though he was, the terror-stricken wretch dropped upon his knees, and held up his hands, imploringly.

"Why is the mob pursuing you? What have you done?"

"There has been a murder committed, at the south-side of town, and I am charged with it. But, as God is my witness, I am innocent, for I have been at the Red Flag all day! Oh! Bristol, please hide me!"

Dick took the lamp from the table.

"Come!" he said; "I'll try it. If they search the house, and find you, it will not be my fault."

"No, it will not be your fault!" Brice replied.

From Dick's room, a door opened into a short dark hall, and from this hall, a staircase descended into the cellar.

So to the cellar the detective conducted the terrified ruffian. Even here, hiding-places were at a premium, but Dick, with his ready tact, was not long improvising one.

Seizing a big empty barrel, he crammed it down over Brice's head.

"Squat, now!" he ordered, "until the barrel touches the ground, and remain in that position, until I return. And you can thank your stars, if they do not find you."

And placing a full basket of potatoes on the barrel head Dick took the lamp, and returned to his own room. All this had been done so quietly, that the Sheldons, in the rear rooms, knew absolutely nothing about it.

Dick had barely reached his room, when he heard the mob approaching.

There must be a horde of them, surely, judging by the yells, and the trample of feet, all of which sounds were coming nearer and nearer.

Mrs. Sheldon and Susie entered Dick's room, pale with affright.

"Oh! Mr. Bristol, what is the matter?" the widow asked, anxiously.

"Oh, nothing much, I guess," Dick answered, assuringly. "You retire to the rear room, and I'll fix everything all right, so far as we are concerned."

So the ladies returned to the kitchen.

By this time the howling mob had reached the house, and there came a loud knock.

Dick at once opened the door, and was confronted by a brawny, six-foot individual, with startling red whiskers.

"I'm the sheriff!" this mountain of muscle and bone announced, "and we're lookin' fer Ben Brice, the murderer! Is he here?"

"Ben Brice!" echoed Dick, in well-assumed astonishment. "What d'ye take us for? D'ye suppose we give shelter to sech cattle as him?"

"I didn't know but what he might hev begged fer purtection, an' ye give et to him!" the official declared.

"Being, myself, a United States detective, I would be in fine feather, harboring criminals of Ben Brice's scamp, wouldn't I?" Dick retorted, with biting sarcasm. "However, here's the house. You're at liberty to search it, if you have got the time to spare. Probably if Brice is fleeing from you, he'd like nothing better than to have you tarry here awhile, and let him get a lead on you."

The sheriff stared at Dick a moment, as if he was at a loss what to make of him; then turning abruptly, he cried:

"By thunder, boys, that's so! The cuss ain't heer, and we're lettin' precious time slip by us. Come on! come on! we'll catch him yet!" and away the officer plunged into the inky night, followed by the howling mob, some of whom carried torches and lanterns, while Dick closed the door with a sense of relief.

"I didn't believe the bluff would work!" he mused, "but it seems it did. Maybe I didn't do just right in screening Brice, but I at least saved a human life. That infuriated mob would have torn him to pieces. Now, he must get, while there is time."

At this juncture, Mrs. Sheldon and Susie entered the room, pale and agitated.

"Oh! Mr. Bristol, are they gone?" the widow gasped. "We were so frightened!"

"They are gone!" Dick replied.

"And that terrible man isn't here? Oh, I am so glad! I knew he could not be here, when you gave the sheriff the privilege of searching the house."

"On the contrary, Ben Brice is here!" Dick declared. "I took the liberty of hiding him. I am human, and I would not see a fellow human torn to pieces by a vengeful mob!"

"Ben Brice is here!" that individual said, stepping inside the room—and a sorry looking sight he was—but only for a minute. Deadwood Dick, king among men, I owe you my life, and will lay it down any time to shield you from harm. The risk you took in protecting me from that mob, has made a new man of me. Henceforth, Ben Brice, the ruffian is no more, but a different and a better man will supersede him. I cannot tarry longer and endanger the lives of these ladies. To-morrow, or next day, at furthest, I will send for you, and keep my promise, as regards the Cohen matter. Good-by!"

"Good-by!" Dick replied, shaking the outstretched hand.

Then the door was opened, and Brice bolted out into darkness and was gone.

Dick closed and locked the door.

"Mr. Bristol, I am astonished that you, of all men should act the part of a humanitarian. I should have thought you would have put him under arrest. He is an awful wretch."

"I firmly believe that, after to-night, no one will have just cause to call him that!" Dick replied. "If you will be kind enough to retire, I wish to prepare for an evening call."

"But the mob! They will come back!" gasped the widow, paling.

"They are coming now!" cried Susie. "Listen!"

Sure enough. A suppressed roar of voices was approaching. It was the mob returning.

They passed the cottage without halting, however, and the sound of voices and trample of feet soon died out.

"There! you'll have no more bother to-night," Dick announced, glancing at his watch.

The mother and daughter took the hint at this and, bidding him good-night, retired to their own room.

Dick then proceeded to make up his disguise of Colonel Jim Cushing, which was by no means an easy task.

While he was thus busied, Billy Bucket arrived and stated that nothing out of the usual routine of business had occurred during the day at the pawn-shop.

At last Dick's disguise was arranged to his satisfaction, and bidding his young partner good-night, he set out to make his evening call upon the Crawfords, in hopes that he would there meet the Widow Redfern.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE REFUGEE.

It was full nine o'clock when Dick rapped upon the door of the Crawford cottage, and pretty Ella came to answer the summons.

"Why, Colonel Cushing!" she cried, giving Dick a cursory glance, "is it you? Come right in. I am sure we are very glad to see you."

Then, as she closed the door, she gave him a nudge and whispered:

"She's here!"

She led the way into the parlor, where Mrs. Crawford and Mrs. Redfern were seated.

"Why, Colonel Cushing, I am delighted to see you, I am sure!" Mrs. Crawford said, rising and extending her hand. "You are quite a stranger. When did you arrive in town?"

"Oh, a few days ago, but being a stranger here, I had some difficulty in finding you," Dick replied, handing her his hat.

"Mr. Cushing, allow me to introduce you to Mrs. Redfern. Mrs. Redfern, Mr. Cushing, a friend of ours."

The introduction was courteously acknowledged, but by no word or action did Dick or the Redfern woman betray that they had ever met before.

After the little party had chatted for a while, Mrs. Crawford said:

"We were about to engage in a game of eucher when you came, colonel. Will you join us?"

"With pleasure!" the colonel replied, "although it is a long time since I engaged in a game with a Chinaman, who tore me out, bad!"

The cards were produced, and several games were played, but Mr. Cushing did not get more than two or three points each game.

"Why, you are in bad luck, Mr. Cushing!" Mrs. Crawford averred.

"I'm bound to be; there's no help for it, when I hold a certain unlucky card, nearly every hand."

"An unlucky card? Why, I didn't know there was one card more unlucky than the rest."

"But, there is, and it is even a fatal card to whoever it follows so persistently."

"To which card do you refer?"

"To the ace of diamonds. There's blood upon that card! It is an omen of death, to win with it. Hence, when I hold it, I always discard it or lose it at first opportunity."

"That's very strange!" Mrs. Crawford remarked. "Shall we have another game?"

"No, I think not," Mrs. Redfern demurred. "It is nearly eleven o'clock, and I have quite a little ways to go, and it is so very dark—so I guess I'd better be going."

"Perhaps you might prevail upon Colonel Cushing to act as your escort," Mrs. Crawford suggested, with a sly glance at her caller.

"It would be great pleasure to me to be of that service," Dick assented, bowing.

"If it will not be too much trouble," Mrs. Redfern implored.

Bidding the Crawfords good-night, the twain took their departure.

En route, through the inky darkness, Dick asked:

"Have you lived long in Leadville, Mrs. Redfern?"

"A trifle over a year."

"You are, I understand, a widow?"

"Alas! yes."

"It must be very lonely for you in that big house. Did your late husband build it?"

"Oh! no. That house has a history. It was built by Jerry Price, the highwayman, who was known here in Leadville as Timothy Green, the miser. He speculated some in stocks, but was never much of a success, and, as he continued to amass wealth, where others failed, it became a matter of public curiosity as to what source he owed his prosperity."

"It was not until on his death-bed that he revealed that he was the notorious Jerry Price, who had, for a long time, succeeded in making rich hauls from stages and Express companies. Yes," the widow added, in conclusion, "it is very lonely in the big house, with only one servant for company."

And she heaved a long sigh.

"I suppose," pursued Dick, "that you have no idea of marrying again?"

"Oh! I might, if I was suited. I should want a man, however, with means to support me. I am wealthy, in a way, but my wealth is not convertible into ready cash."

"I see. Well, I cannot blame you for wishing to be provided for," Dick assured her.

They soon came to the Redfern residence.

"Won't you come in, and have a glass of wine?" the widow asked.

"No, not to-night, as the hour is late. With your permission, perhaps, I'll call to-morrow evening."

"Do so. I shall be glad to have you!" the scheming widow gushingly declared.

They then shook hands, bade each other good-night, and Dick turned his steps homeward.

"To-morrow night!" he mused, "I'll have a look at the Cohen diamonds, and wind up the case maybe."

He returned to the Sheldon cottage, removed his disguise, and turned in for a good night's sleep.

The next day, he remained at the cottage, presuming that, if he received any message at all, from Ben Brice, it would be sent there.

The morning also brought the news that Ben Brice was probably not the murderer of the man at the south end, as a chain of circumstances had been unearthed that pointed toward another desperado, who had been arrested.

The forenoon passed, and, by noonday, Dick had about given up all hope of hearing from Brice.

"He has probably skipped for parts unknown," the detective concluded. "Well, so be it! I won't bother my head about him."

But, just after dinner, a little half-breed boy made his appearance at the cottage, with a note for Mr. Richard Bristol.

It was simply a strip of brown paper, on which was written:

"Follow the boy. He will bring you. B. B."

Donning his coat, he followed the lead of the dusky lad, and had all he could do to keep up with him, for the young red-skin was as fleet of foot as a fawn.

In due time, after a toilsome climb up the mountain-side, they entered the mouth of an abandoned tunnel, or, as it is known in mining parlance—a drift.

Advancing into this a short distance, they came to a little fire, and there Brice was, lying upon the ground.

With an effort, he arose to his feet, and extended his hand. He was very pale, and had washed most of the blood from his face and hands.

"Welcome, my good friend! I felt sure you would come. Take a seat on the ground—for, you see, my stock of furniture is not very extensive."

"You look pale!" Dick observed. "Are you wounded?"

"Only a flesh wound, and that's stopped bleeding, now. I'm purty weak, but I guess I'll pull through all right. How's things in town?"

"I hear that another man has been arrested, and it is now thought probable that you did not commit the murder."

"Thank God for that! Bad as I have been, there is no stain of blood upon my hand! And, now, I suppose, you want to know about the stage robbery?"

"Yes."

"I presume you have suspected me of having a hand in it?"

"It don't matter. You can give me your version of the affair, and I will make my own deductions from your statement."

"Well, at the time of the stage robbery, and the murder of old Cohen, I was sick—flat on my back, with the delirium tremens. I never knew anything about the affair, until a week afterward, and never suspected who the robbers were until some time after that."

"How did you find out, then?"

"Well, you see, Ray Redfern—maybe you've heard o' him—and myself, were chums; sort of bosom companions as it were. When he got broke, at playing bank, he'd come to me for a 'lift,' and when I got broke, I'd go to him; so, we were sorter like brothers to one another."

"Well, one night when we had been soakin' in the bug-juice pretty stiff, Redfern got over-confidential, and told me all about the stage-coach business."

"It seems the whole thing had been planned out, before the robbery. Mrs. Redfern, who had just come from the South, had known the Cohens were about to start for Leadville. She had hastened on in advance, posted Ray, and together they concocted a scheme for robbery."

"They were in Pueblo when the Cohens arrived, and learned of the bargain the Jew made to be brought on to Leadville by stage."

"Thoroughly equipped in horse-flesh, and disguised, they took a short cut, and reached the point where the robbery occurred, in advance of the stage."

"What then and there occurred, has probably

been told you. They secured a rich haul of jewels and money, and old Cohen was shot, after which they successfully made their escape. Redfern told me all this, and bound me by a promise to keep it a secret while he lived. He was killed not long afterward.

"Now, detective, I've given it to you as straight as I got it, and I hope you believe me."

"I do!" Dick replied. "But, there is one point you have omitted. Who fired the shot that killed Mr. Cohen?"

"Roxie Redfern, Ray's wife. It was she who originated the whole business; it was she who drove poor Ray down, step by step, to ruin!"

"And you've been bleeding her of money, from time to time, on the strength of your knowledge of the crime?"

"Well, yes, I don't mind acknowledging that. I saw the local detectives were not likely to ferret out the case, and so I says to myself, I might as well have a whack out of the pie as not. But, how did you find out that I was receiving money from Mrs. Redfern? Now that I am going to reform—I've taken my solemn oath on that—there can be no harm in your telling me."

Dick smiled.

"Do you remember Jim Cushing, of Texas?" he asked.

Brice gave vent to a prolonged whistle of astonishment.

"Jim Cushing?" he ejaculated.

"And you were he?"

"I was!"

"By all that's wonderful! I see it all, now. It was you who inserted the aceless ace of diamonds in the pack, and as a test?"

"Yes."

"And you overheard the conversation between Mrs. Redfern and myself? How much did you understand of it?"

"All that was spoken in French. The German I did not understand."

"You learned enough to post you," Brice grimly replied, as he arose and paced to and fro, along the passage. "I'm not sorry I concluded to mend my ways. With such ferrets as you above ground, a crook stands a poor show. Henceforth, I'll lead a straightforward life."

"I hope so," Dick replied. "There's no reason why you should not redeem yourself."

"Maybe not. Bristol have you seen my—my wife?"

"You mean Edna Grey?"

"Yes. I have been a brute, but I do love her! Now that the better part of my nature has the mastery, I see how I have wronged her. I want you to intercede for me, and ask her if she can find it possible to forgive me, since I have resolved to lead a better life."

"At present, it is impossible!" Dick replied.

"Impossible? And how, pray?"

"Simply because, tired of your brutality, your wife has gone back to her mother!"

Brice uttered a groan of anguish.

"Then all is lost!" he moaned. "There is nothing for me to live for—no future for me to hope for, except—hell!"

"Say not so," Dick encouraged. "Although you have trampled upon that poor girl's very heart and soul, and abused her woman's trust and confidence in you, I do not think the case is altogether hopeless. With all your faults, I believe she loves you still. But first of all make a man of yourself! Leave off all your old associations, and strive to gain the confidence of worthy people, and you will not find it hard to do, when they see you are in earnest. When I see you are in earnest, if any intercession on my part will restore you to your wife, you shall have it."

"Thank you, Bristol, thank you! I cannot find fit terms to express my gratitude. Shall I remain here?"

"Until you hear from me again. Have you money?"

"Yes. The boy will get what I want."

"Very well. Be of good cheer. As soon as you are cleared of the charge of murder I will let you know. Good-by."

"Good by! Oh! that all men were like you!"

They shook hands, and Dick disappeared.

CHAPTER XIV.

FINIS.

WHEN the detective returned to Leadville, there was literally little for him to do, for all depended upon his visit to Mrs. Redfern that evening in regard to how soon he should arrest her.

It would not do to precipitate matters.

In the first place, he wanted Ben Brice as a witness against her.

In order to have Brice as an acceptable witness, the charge of murder against him must satisfactorily be cleared away.

In the second place, he wanted to have some accurate idea of where the treasure was concealed, before he caused an arrest.

Just how his visit to the widow, that evening, might result, he of course could not foresee; but he meant that, through no fault of his own, should he risk being entrapped.

So he visited the pawnshop of Rachel Cohen, and calling Billy Bucket aside, gave him a number of instructions, and repeated them several times over, so that Billy could not well have forgotten them, if he had tried.

Rachel watched the two detectives curiously, eagerly. When their conference was ended, she said, with half a pout upon her pretty lips:

"It seems that I am not in your confidence, Mr. Bristol!"

Dick laughed.

"Far from that!" he assured. "I was simply giving my *aide* some instructions that could not possibly interest you. Besides, I preferred not to raise your hopes or anticipations."

"Then you really have found out something definite?" Rachel demanded.

"Well, yes," Dick rather reluctantly answered. "I can place my hand upon the person who murdered your father, within ten minutes, if I like. But, that is all I can tell you, at present."

He then left the store.

"What a strange man!" Rachel said, gazing after him. "What did he say to you, Billy?"

The boy gave her a sarcastic glance.

"Now, *ain't* you cute?" he growled. "Ye'r no perception to the rule."

"I don't understand you, Billy."

"I mean ye'r just like the rest of 'em. Wanter know everything ye hadn't orter know."

"But you might tell me, Billy."

"Yas; so might I go over over and tell Biddy Maginn, wot keeps the grocery store!" retorted the young Bucket, importantly. "Say, did ye ever see a goose?"

"Why, to be sure I have."

"Ever know one that didn't quack?"

"Why, I don't know, I am sure."

"Well, I never did. I never knew a goose what wouldn't squawk all she knowed, ef her head was to be cut off the next minnit. And, that's jest the case wi' a gal about yer tender years."

"Oh! you little wretch!" cried Miss Cohen, seizing an umbrella, and making for him. But, Billy was spry, if he was anything, and was out on the sidewalk ere Miss Cohen could get anywhere near him.

Eventually Billy re-entered the store, with the audacious and complacent smile of the true street gamin.

"Ain't mad, aire ye, Miss Cohen?" he queried.

"No, but you shouldn't be so provoking. I'm a friend of yours, and you'll need one directly. Mr. Bristol will soon be going away, and then who'll be your friend, except me? I want you to stay with me, and I'll take you in as a partner!"

Billy puckered up his lips and whistled softly.

"A partner, hey?"

"Yes. You will assist me in the business, and get half the profits."

"But, say, where's the profits come in? I've seen you dishin' out the sugar on a lot of truck, but I'll be blown if I've see'd any *cash* come in!"

"Oh! It will come in time," Miss Cohen assured.

"Yas, and so will the Fourth of July, ef you wait long enough!" returned Billy. "No! I reckon I will stick to Dick. He and I aire goin' to run fer President soon's the Prohibitioners get the mumps."

It is scarcely necessary to say that Miss Cohen gave up in despair of that partnership, while Billy smiled with triumph.

Deadwood Dick, before returning to the Sheldon cottage, made some inquiries in regard to the new murder case. He found that the man who had been arrested had as good as made a confession of the crime, so Dick dropped in upon the chief of police, and, introducing himself, officially, said:

"I called to see what is new in this murder case."

"Are you interested?" the chief demanded.

"Somewhat," was the reply. "I have, for private reasons, hunted up enough evidence to satisfy me that Ben Brice had no hand in it."

"Well, I am of the same opinion. At first I

suspected Brice, for, you know, he has a pretty tough record. But, later developments have satisfied me that he was not the man."

"You think you have caught the right man?"

"I think I can safely say I do."

"Then, if Brice makes his reappearance in this city, will you guarantee immunity against arrest?"

"That depends somewhat on circumstances. You seem to take a singular interest in the man!"

"For a very good reason. I have proven to you what I am, have I not?"

"You have."

"Do you doubt the proof?"

"Not in the slightest."

"Very well. I came here to your city on a trip of pleasure, with no thought of engaging in my profession. Nevertheless, I have, in a few days, wormed out a secret that your force has for months been struggling to grasp. Brice is invaluable in what I have discovered, so I want him relieved from all liability of arrest!"

The chief eyed the young man a moment, as if in a quandary of doubt, intermingled with admiration.

"You're a cool one!" he observed. "I never believed half I had heard of you, before!"

Turning to his clerk, he said:

"Send out orders not to arrest Brice. We don't want him!"

Turning to the redoubtable detective, he said:

"Step into my private office, please."

Dick followed him, and when the twain were seated, the chief said:

"I have granted your request. Now, *what* have you discovered?"

"I have unraveled the mystery of the stage robbery six months or more ago, and found out who murdered Cohen, the Jew!"

"The deuce you say!" the chief ejaculated, incredulously, "and after all the efforts the force has made? I don't believe it!"

"You are welcome to believe what you like!" Dick replied. "One man on a case like that is invariably better than twenty."

"Very true. Well, if you *have* ferreted out that case, all credit is certainly due you. Who is the guilty party?"

"If I inform you, am I to direct this case without local interference, and, at the same time, have I the benefit of calling upon your police, if I need them?"

"Most assuredly."

"Then, as quietly as possible, and with the strictest secrecy possible, please issue me a warrant, charging Mrs. Roxie Redfern with willful murder!"

"What! Raymond Redfern's widow?"

"Ay, and Raymond Redfern, too, were he living!" Dick replied. "With the warrant of arrest, I also want a search-warrant. I want it individually—not the sheriff."

The chief arose, and paced the floor a few seconds, his brows knitted thoughtfully.

"Young man," he said, directly, "you're a trump! Do you know, an idea once entered my noddle to look up the case in that direction? But, I dismissed it!"

"You were not sanguine enough!" Dick smiled.

"No, I was a blamed fool!" the official admitted, in evident disgust.

Then he abruptly left the private office.

A few minutes later he returned, and handed Dick a package of official papers.

"That will fix you out," he stated, "and, of course, if you need any assistance, you are at liberty to call upon any of the force. When do you expect to make the arrest?"

"Either late to-night or to-morrow. It all depends somewhat on circumstances. I am very much obliged to you, chief, and hope I may be able some day to do you a favor."

Dick left the station, and set out for the Widow Sheldon's.

Here he remained until night, and, meanwhile, resumed his disguise of Colonel Cushing.

About seven o'clock that evening he set out on his visit to Mrs. Redfern.

In the matter of preparation he had left nothing undone. He had armed himself, supplied himself with straps and handcuffs, and above all, carried the warrants issued by the chief of police.

When he reached the Redfern residence, his ring of the door-bell was answered by Get-There Eli Johnson, who was evidently maid and man of all work.

"Is Mrs. Redfern in?" Dick inquired.

"She is, sah!" Eli replied. "Do you want to see her?"

"I do."

"Berry well, sah; I will tell her."

And the door was closed in Dick's face.

It was opened directly, however, and the inky visage of Eli once more appeared.

"Be you de Colonel Cushing?" he demanded.

"I am Colonel Cushing!" Dick replied.

"Berry well, sah! Walk right in, sah! You'll find de missus in de parlor, sah!"

And a moment later, Dick found himself ushered into the presence of Mrs. Redfern.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Cushing!" the widow said, effusively, as she gave him a chair near the cheery grate fire. It is so very dark out, that I hardly expected you would come."

"I should have come, if it had rained pitchforks!" the gallant Cushing replied.

They chatted for awhile, Dick in the mean time making a sharp study of the room.

It was fairly well furnished, and not unlike many another parlor, with one exception.

At one side of the room, there was an oaken chest, the lid of which was fastened down with a padlock.

It was not a portable affair, being built stationary with the wall and floor.

"That's an odd piece of furniture!" Dick observed.

"Yes, it is an unsightly thing!" the widow replied, "and I have repeatedly threatened to have it removed. They tell me Jerry Price used to keep his booty stored in that chest."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. When he died ten thousand dollars in gold was found in the chest. It was left there pending a coroner's inquest. When it was next looked for, it had disappeared, and to this day, no one knows whatever became of it. By the way, Mr. Cushing, will you have a glass of champagne with me? I ordered a basket just on your account, as I know most Southern gentlemen are fond of it."

"I don't often indulge in drinks of that kind!" Dick replied, "but I would surely not be so ungallant as to refuse you, *chere dame*!"

"Thank you! But I will have to ask you to open the bottle, as I am wholly inexperienced in that art."

"I presume I shall be equal to the emergency," the colonel replied.

Madam then touched a silver call-bell, when Get-there-Eli directly appeared.

"A bottle of champagne—the one nearest the ice," the widow ordered. "Also glasses, and something to pry the wires off the bottle with."

And Eli retired.

"I wonder if she is trying a game on me?" Dick thought. "I can tell when I see the bottle. If she is *not*, I'll fill her up on champagne until she becomes communicative, and then take her in."

Alas! when success seems positively within our grasp, we are not always capable of grasping it.

The quart bottle of champagne was presently brought in, together with glasses and broken ice, and a glance convinced Dick that the bottle had not been tampered with.

Had he made a second and more searching examination, his opinion might have been reversed.

At any rate, Dick opened the bottle with the skill of an experienced bartender, and poured out a glass each for the widow and himself.

"Well, Mr. Cushing, here's toasting that you may never return to Texas without a wife!" the widow proposed.

"Thank you!" Dick returned, "and here's hoping I may never take to Texas a woman who deals out drugged champagne!" Rising from the table: "Mrs. Redfern, I will no longer encroach upon your hospitality. By virtue of a warrant issued by the chief of police of this city I arrest you—"

The remainder of the sentence was unfinished. A terrific blow on the side of the head dropped Deadwood Dick to the floor like a log.

But he was not unconscious.

He was, for the time being, simply helpless. He saw, and understood, but all power seemed to have left his limbs. He saw Mrs. Redfern and Eli Johnson hovering over him, and heard the widow say:

"Bind him securely, and we will put him in the chest. That will fix him safe enough until we can get away from the town."

Then Dick felt himself being bound hand and foot.

He tried to speak, but could not.

He tried to move, but could not.

He was literally paralyzed, except his brain, and that was active enough.

He heard the chest unlocked, and the ponderous lid lifted.

He was conscious of being raised in the strong arms of Eli Johnson, and placed in a heap in the big chest.

Then the lid came down with a bang, and all was blank.

The lid had hardly shut the figure of Dick Bristol from view when there came a violent ringing at the door-bell, which was immediately repeated.

Mrs. Redfern turned deathly white.

"Who can it be?" she gasped.

"Gib it up!" Eli chattered, his knees beginning to knock together with terror. "Maybe it's the police!"

"Let them ring!" the widow said, sinking down on the sofa and setting her teeth hard together. "They will never take me alive!"

She evidently knew what was coming, and was prepared for it, for in her hand, concealed in the folds of her dress, she clutched a silver-mounted dagger.

"Let them come!" she hissed. "They'll never find that accursed detective until he is dead, anyhow!"

Get-there Eli, terrified beyond expression, had crept under the sofa.

The bell rung again, again, and again.

Then there was a brief pause.

"Maybe they've gone away!" the murderess thought.

But no!

The reaction came, a moment later.

There was a loud crash, and she knew, by footsteps in the hall, that the front door had been broken open.

An instant later the door of the parlor was opened and the acting-captain of police, Shelley, accompanied by Billy Bucket, Ben Brice, and two other policemen marched into the room.

"Madam!" said the captain, "we are looking for a man named Cushing, *alias* Bristol, the detective. He entered this house awhile ago and has not left it since. *Where is he?*"

"You are mistaken. He left half an hour ago!"

"He did not! It matters not, however. We can find him. As for you, Roxie Redfern, in behalf of Detective Bristol, I will put you under arrest for the murder of Cohen, the Jew!"

"Never!" the widow cried, springing to her feet. "I will first kill the man who betrayed me, then I'll kill myself!"

Brice stood nearest to her, and, leaping suddenly toward him, she thrust the poniard into his breast and, quick as a flash, drove the crimson blade into her own bosom!

The tragedy was complete.

"Search the house, you three!" the captain ordered, "for the detective must be here; and you, Seidel, go for the coroner!"

The search was made, and the chest was the last thing examined.

Here Dick was found, unconscious.

An hour more, and his detective exploits in this world would have been at an end.

Restoratives were applied, and after a time he was up and able to walk again.

Eli Johnson was dragged from under the sofa, and given in charge of one of the officers, who marched him off to the "cooler."

The coroner came and viewed the bodies, and ordered them to remain where they were until morning.

Detective Bristol was left in charge of the premises, and retained as an assistant, Billy Bucket.

During the night they made a thorough search of the premises, and were rewarded by finding most of the diamonds and other jewelry of which the Cohens had been robbed. The Government bond, too, was discovered in a treasure-box within the bureau of Mrs. Redfern's private room, but the money was missing—probably had been used up long ago.

"Well," Dick remarked, "the trail has ended, and I am not sorry for it. As soon as we are through here, Billy, we will have a pleasure trip in earnest, and not take hold of another case, no matter how urgent it may be!"

Dear reader, this is not a love story; consequently there are no heroes or heroines to be married off, in the stereotyped manner, and therefore, too, there is little left to add.

Deadwood Dick returned to Rachel Cohen all the booty he had recovered, and the grateful Jewess rewarded both the redoubtable detective and Billy in a liberal manner.

Ben Brice was buried at Dick's expense, while

the expenses of Mrs. Redfern's funeral were borne by the coroner.

Dick and Billy remained in the mountain city a couple of weeks longer, on purpose to hear from Edna Grey, and they were not disappointed, for one day the following message came:

"I am home, and forgiven, and content. If you stay long in Leadville, and see any change in Ben, let me know. With all his faults, I love him still. As for you, you must know that in my nightly prayers I do not forget your exceeding kindness and honorable conduct. EDNA GREY."

A feeling of inexpressible sadness came over Deadwood Dick as he read these lines.

"With all his faults, I love him still!"

Almost the same words he had uttered to Ben Brice in the mountain drift.

Poor Brice! How the words would have cheered him in his undoubtedly earnest resolve to lead a better life!

But he was cut off in the very beginning of his new life.

Was it not a fitting exemplification that we who wait too long will be too late?

Dick simply wrote back:

"Poor Brice is dead. But he died with the resolve firmly fixed in his heart that he would live a new and better life, in the fond hope of winning back that which he once had trampled on."

"DEADWOOD DICK."

THE END.

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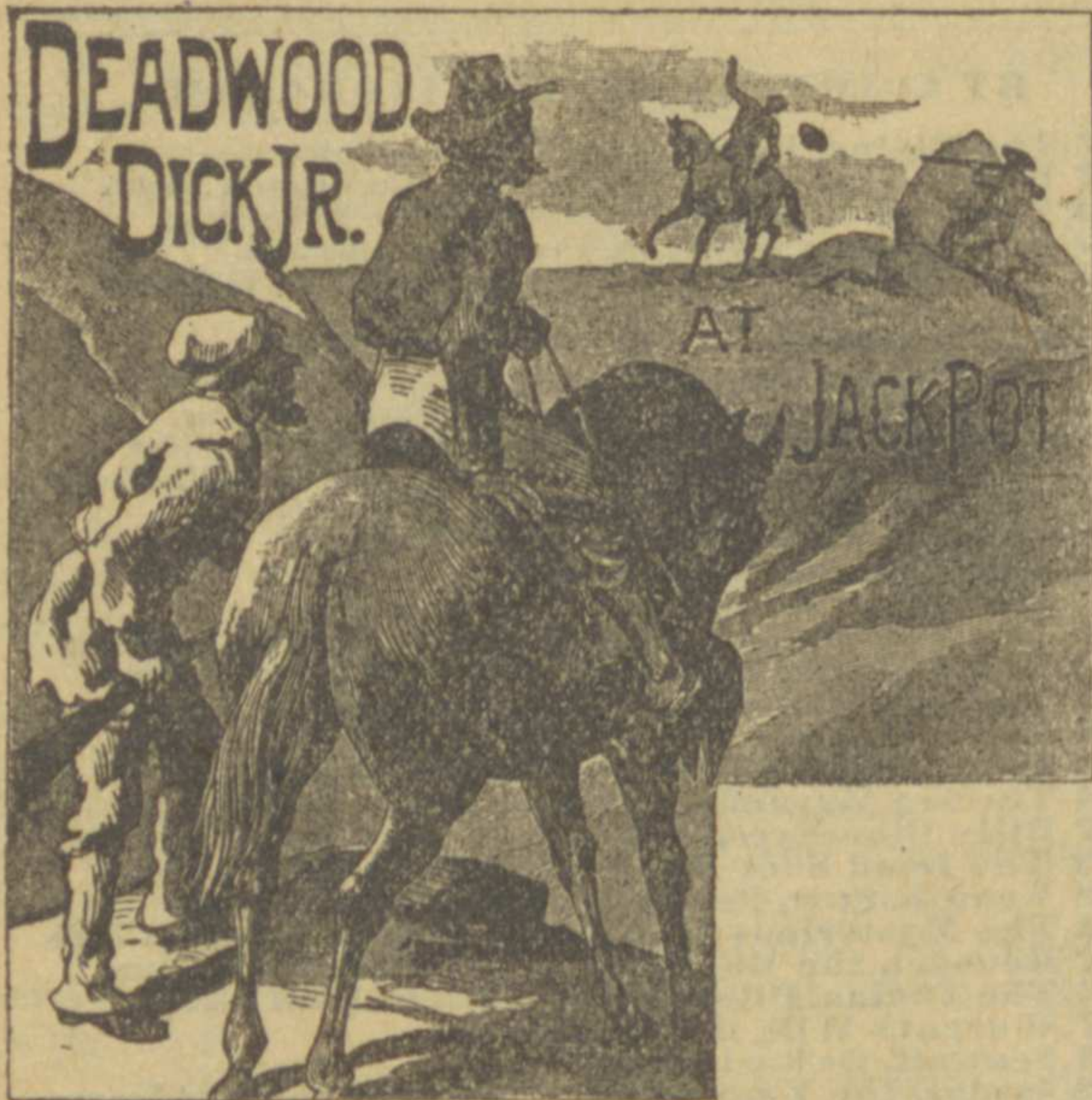
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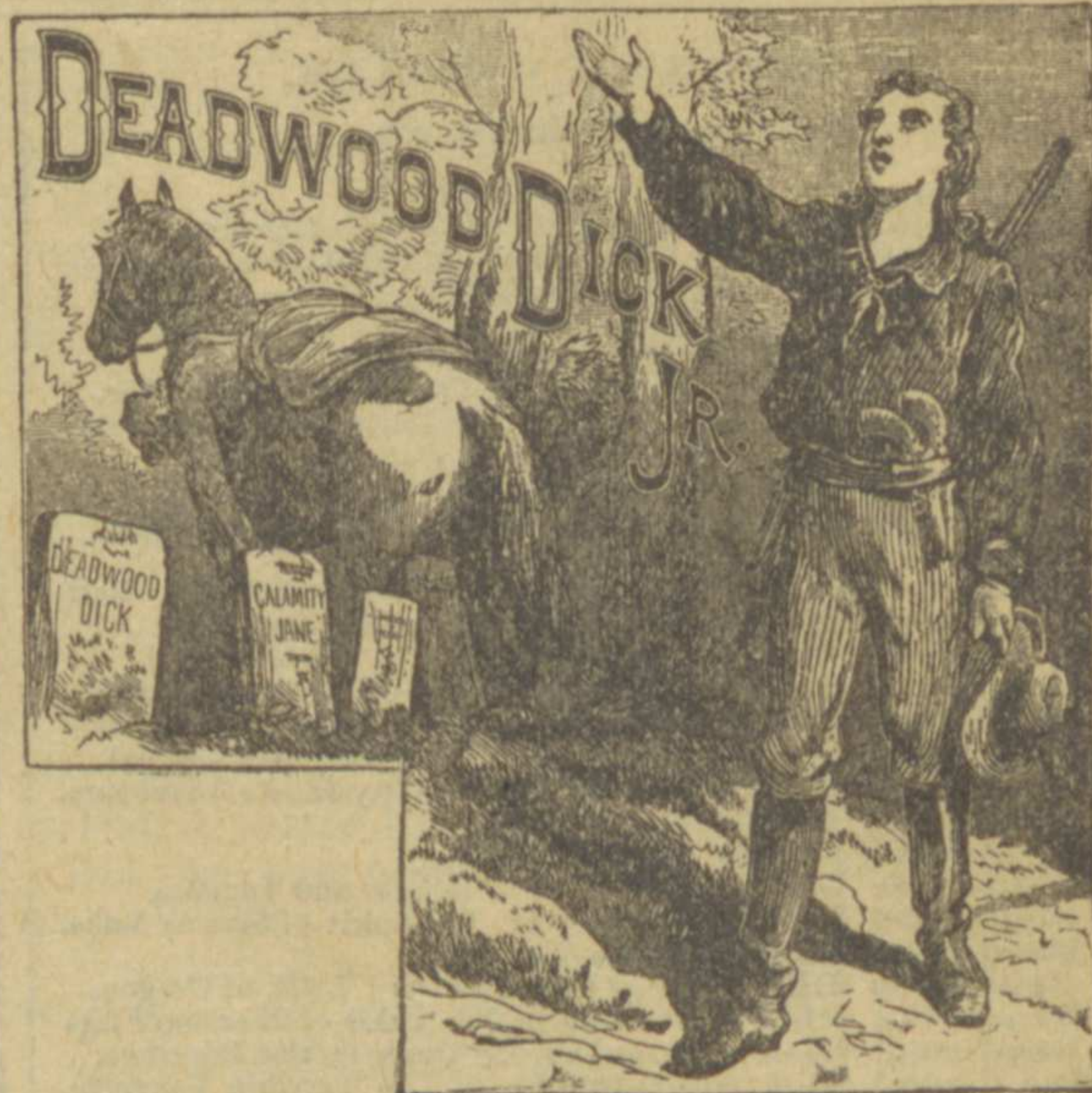
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